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A

COMPENDIUM

OF

Social Religion,

OR THE

NATURE and CONSTITUTION

OF

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES,

WITH THE

Reſpective Qualifications and Duties of their

OFFICERS and MEMBERS

Repreſented in ſhort Propoſitions, confirm'd by Scripture,

AND

Illuſtrated with Occaſional Notes.

DESIGNED

As an ESSAY towards reviving the primitive Spirit of Evangelical *Purity*, *Liberty*, and *Charity*, in the Churches of the preſent Times.

By *DANIEL TURNER.*

——— *Sed ſæpius annis*
A noſtris oculos, ad ſæcula priſca retorque
Cum rudis & ſimplex, nondum ſe fecerat artem
Religio ———. Grot. ad Thuan.

——*And they that believed were together, and continued in the Apoſtles Doctrine, and breaking of Bread, and Prayers.*
Act. ii. 42. 44.

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MDCCLVIII.

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THE INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

MAN, is very juſtly ſtiled a *ſocial being*, --he is ſuch by original conſtitution; he was declared ſuch when he firſt came out of the hands of his Maker *; and he now comes into the world, with a *diſpoſition for ſociety*, and in a *condition* that *requires* it.--- The firſt ſenſations we feel, ariſe from our wants; our firſt propenſities and deſires, tend to the ſupply of thoſe wants; whence we are led, by a kind of natural *inſtinct*, into ſome of the *neareſt ſocial* connections, and thoſe interchanges of offices and benefits that ariſe from them.

And as we improve in *rational notions*, and are capable of reflecting upon the nature and ends of our exiſtence; as our *ſelf-love* comes under the influence of *benevolence*, and is directed and moderated by it, we find our ſelves prompted to enlarge our ſocial relations and

 duties,

* *Gen.* ii. 18.

duties, from more generous and worthy motives.

And much of the wiſdom and goodneſs of providence appears, in giving us this *ſocial capacity and diſpoſition*:---without it---our nobleſt faculties wou'd be of little or no uſe to us, for want of proper occaſions for their exerciſe, and proper aſſiſtance in it.—*Self-love* alone wou'd be the governing principle; which by blindly miſtaking the nature and means of our happineſs, and cheriſhing our malevolent affections, wou'd make us hateful, and hate one another; and ſo, either expoſe us to the miſeries of the moſt arbitrary oppreſſions, and cruel hoſtilities; or oblige us to hide our ſelves in the gloomy receſſes of friendleſs ſolitude.---Whereas, by following the dictates of the *ſocial principle*, we open to ourſelves a way, for the abundant employment of all our various geniuſes and abilities; and by reciprocal aids and encouragements, render them the moſt effectually and extenſively uſeful.---*Benevolence*, cheriſhed and ſupported by the pleaſures always attendant on its proper exerciſe, maintains its ſhare of governing influence in the heart, teaches

teaches us to consider the happiness of others, as inseparably connected with our own, and a principal ingredient in it; and thereby extends our views, warms our desires, and animates our labours for the public good.---Hence domestic and patriot love, order, peace, friendship, and many other public and private virtues and blessings, of the greatest importance to mankind.

But then, *this disposition*, must be *properly cultivated*, in order to produce these happy effects; and *here* RELIGION justly claims our *first* and *principal* regards.

By RELIGION I mean the *acknowledgment, fear, love, and worship of the* DEITY, *with a disposition to obey all his known will, founded in the lively belief of his perfections, and a future state of retribution.*---Of *this*, man as a rational immortal creature, endowed with a *moral sense*, or a capacity of perceiving the moral nature and differences, good or evil of things, and feeling a peculiar pleasure or pain from them, is a proper subject. *This* is the glory of his nature, as *principally* distinguishing him from all other creatures upon

earth; and *abſolutely neceſſary* to him as the chief medium of his happineſs, temporal and eternal;---neceſſary, not *only* in his *ſingle* capacity, but *alſo*, and *eminently* in his *ſocial*. For,

Such is the degeneracy of human nature, that *without* the influence of *religion*; *reaſon and benevolence*, which are abſolute requiſites to the forming the truly *ſocial* character, wou'd (by degrees at leaſt) be ſo weakened and impaired, that the *bulk* of mankind would become groſsly ignorant, ſelfiſh, ſordid, ungovernable, pernicious creatures; miſerable ſlaves to their vicious appetites and paſſions; without *honour*, without *conſcience*, or any *effectual* motive to true public ſpirit; and conſequently liable, upon the ſlighteſt temptations, to ſacrifice the greateſt and moſt important *public* good, to their own *private* intereſt, or even the loweſt ſenſual gratifications; and thus muſt prove the peſt and ruin of ſociety *.---RELIGION, be it *only*

* Since I wrote this, I have met with a paſſage in Dr. *Brown*'s *eſtimate of the manners and principles of the times*, to the ſame purpoſe: "The modern ſpirit of ir-
"religion

only that of *nature*, will prevent us at leaſt from ſinking ſo low, and doing ſuch prejudice to the *ſocial* intereſt of mankind; but if *that* of JESUS, ſincerely embraced and followed, it will do infinitely more.---The light the goſpel throws upon our underſtandings; and the views it gives us of virtue and vice; the perfections of God; the true felicity of man; the certainty and awfulneſs of the eternal world; have a peculiar fitneſs and tendency to pierce and quicken the conſcience; preſerve its tenderneſs and ſenſibility; reſtrain the inordinate affections of ſelf-love; expand and cheriſh our benevolence; unite us to each other in the bonds of ſacred *charity* **; and inſpire

" religion (ſays that ingenious writer) leads to raſcally " and abandon'd cowardice; it quenches every generous " hope that can enlarge the ſoul, and levels mankind " with the beaſts that periſh." The chriſtian reader may receive ſtill fuller ſatisfaction on this head from *Gen.* vi. 11, 12. *Pſal.* i. 14, &c. *Rom.* i. 21, &c.

** It may poſſibly be objected here,—*who ſo uncharitable, cenſorious and full of perſecuting rancour, as ſome of your zealous chriſtians, moſt diſtinguiſh'd for the orthodoxy of their faith, and the ſtrictneſs of their devotion?* I anſwer, nothing can be more evident, than that the chriſtian

us with the hope, and even aſſurance, that all the ſacrifices we make, of private advantage, to the honour and intereſt of the public (conſiſtent with our duty) ſhall be infinitely, tho' graciouſly rewarded in the life to come; and conſequently, muſt every way moſt effectually promote and ſecure, the happineſs of *ſociety*.

The exalted perfection of *ſocial unity and joy*, which prevails in the heavenly world, and felicitates the *general aſſembly* and *church of*

chriſtian religion ranks thoſe vices, amongſt the greateſt ſins; condemns all that are guilty of them, to the ſevereſt puniſhments; and by doctrine, precept, example, and every motive that can affect the human heart, inculcates upon all its profeſſors, the oppoſite virtues; ſo that it muſt be the higheſt injuſtice, to charge any part, of what is objected, upon that religion. And, that any of its profeſſed believers are chargeable with it, is owing, either to their aſſuming that character, in order to conceal their wicked deſigns, or juſtify the violences by which they carry them on; or to ſuperſtition, enthuſiaſm, and the like falſe notions of religion, join'd with a natural moroſeneſs, and malignity of temper; or in a word, to the want of being under the governing influence of the genuine principles of the goſpel.—To the truth of this, every ſober conſcience muſt witneſs.

of the firſt born, is owing to the perfection of their *religion*.---They ſee the adorable excellencies of the divine nature, in the light of that world.---They feel their obligations to their redeemer, in the moſt ſenſible manner; reverence, love, worſhip and obey the great God, in the perfection of holineſs,---and therefore they enjoy their *ſocial* relations with ſuch high ſatisfaction, and know all the pleaſures of the moſt pure benevolence and friendſhip, without any of thoſe alienations of heart, contentions, and jealouſies, that attend the happieſt ſocieties here below.

And as *religion*, is thus neceſſary and beneficial to man, in his *ſocial* capacity; it is alſo neceſſary that his religion ſhou'd be *ſocial*; i. e. the duties of it, particularly thoſe reſpecting the *worſhip of the Deity*, ſhou'd be *publickly performed*, as the common concern and *united* act of many.---To this, the ſocial conſtitution we are under, naturally obliges us.---We are all the offspring of one eternal parent, all under the ſame general obligations to him, and dependance upon him, intereſted in common, in many of the ſame wants and neceſſities, benefits and mercies;

mercies; and therefore ought to offer up our prayers and praiſes unitedly to him, as the one common head of the ſocial ſyſtem; the one common object of our religious reverence, hope, and joy.---And upon this *ſocial piety*, the very *exiſtence* of religion and virtue, in our world, and the preſervation of the many benefits to ſociety, connected therewith, eminently depend.—Were religious duties to be practis'd by us *only* in *private*; were there no *aſſembling of ourſelves together*; to proclaim its excellencies and uſefulneſs, and bear an open teſtimony by common conſent in its favour; its public eſtimation wou'd very ſoon decline; the leaſt appearances of it be mark'd with diſgrace, and treated with contempt and ridicule, by the bulk of mankind; and under ſuch diſcouragements, even the *private* practice of it by degrees, wou'd be ſadly neglected, and very probably at laſt, intirely ſo; by which means, all its influence muſt ſoon be loſt in the world.---The natural conſequence of which, wou'd be, the uncontroulable prevalence of infidelity, and prophaneſs, injuſtice, and oppreſſion; 'till the bonds even of civil ſociety were diſſolved,

and

and mankind let loose with all their vicious passions, upon one another to the destruction of human virtue and happiness:—The *religion* of man therefore, I say even in this world must be *social.*

This will appear with still clearer and more certain evidence, if we consult the sacred records; for there we shall find, that *social religion* is the *will of God*; and has always been the *practice* of his *people.*--When he separated the seed of *Abraham* as a peculiar and holy nation, to bear his name, and preserve his worship, in opposition to the general idolatry; he commanded *all the males thrice a year to make their appearance before him*, and worship him in one national assembly. And to all that had a true sense of religion, his *public worship*, was peculiarly desirable; as the 84th Psalm in particular witnesses, where in the spirit of truly sublime poetry, the Psalmist strongly expresses, his pious sense of the excellency and importance of *social religion.*—And elsewhere he says, that *dwelling* in *the house of God*, appearing before him in his public worship, and *beholding his beauty and glory in his sanctuary*,

ſanctuary, was the one thing he deſired, and ſought after, with the greateſt ardency of affection *.

And under the New Teſtament diſpenſation we are charged, not to forſake the *aſſembling of our ſelves together*, as the manner of ſome then was.—But with *one heart, and with one mouth to glorify God.*—And 'tis ſaid by way of encomium on the firſt converts to the chriſtian religion, that they *were together with one accord in prayer and praiſe.*

Our Lord himſelf alſo has directed us to addreſs the throne of grace, in the language of *ſocial religion*, and ſay, *Our father who art in heaven*, &c. And has made great and precious promiſes to the duties of piety perform'd in *ſocial unity*.—From ſuch conſiderations as theſe, and the more effectually to anſwer the ends of *ſocial religion*, the apoſtles of Chriſt, under the direction of his ſpirit, form'd their converts into diſtinct regulated

* *Pſal.* xxvii. 4. *Pſal.* lxiii. 1, 2, 3. *Heb.* x. 25. *Rom.* xv. 6. *Acts* i. 14. chap. ii. 1, 41. chap. ix. 31. chap. xi. 26. 2 *Cor.* viii. 1. *Gal.* i. 1.

gulated ſocieties, called CHURCHES; hence we read of the *Churches of Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Macedonia, Galatia, Aſia*, &c. And of the apoſtles aſſembling with the church at *Antioch*; and of people being *added to the church.*

Thus it is abundantly evident, that *ſocial religion* in general, and the *conſtitution of chriſtian churches* in particular, as neceſſary to the ſupport and practice of it, are of *divine appointment* *;—*Or a wiſe and gracious inſtitution of God, deſign'd for the preſervation of true religion, and ſecuring happineſs to mankind.*

Every ſerious chriſtian therefore, if he wou'd follow the dictates of his ſocial nature, the directions of the word of God, and the example of the beſt of men,---If he wou'd improve himſelf in the power and comforts of the divine life,---contribute moſt effectually to the ſupport and propagation of *true religion*,---do the higheſt honour to God, and

* I don't mean to aſſert, *how* far *any* of the *particular forms* of church government amongſt us, are of divine appointment.

and the greateſt good to the world,---muſt connect himſelf (as he has opportunity) with ſome regular chriſtian ſociety, and unite with them, in all the ordinances and duties that God has promiſed to bleſs to thoſe important ends.

But then he ſhou'd take particular care, to be acquainted with the *nature*, and *deſign* of ſuch *ſocieties*; and the reſpective duties of their *officers*, and *members*; and do what he does, from a principle of love to God, and religion,---that he may offer to him a *reaſonable ſervice*, and fill up his place with propriety and honour; with advantage to himſelf and the community.---Here it is that too many fail.---They enter into the ſacred and intereſting relation of church fellowſhip, without knowing, at leaſt without duly conſidering, the reaſons why, or the ends for which they do ſo. An affectation of extraordinary ſanctity, and deſire of the applauſe of men;---the gratifying an ignorant enthuſiaſtic zeal;---or the engaging *deep* in the little intereſt of a party--are, 'tis to be feared, too often the ruling motives in this caſe: at beſt they look upon it, as little

little more than entitling them to the Lord's Table; and not as engaging them in any *special relation* and duty to the ſociety they commune with, in particular, and all other truly chriſtian ſocieties in general, and laying them under many peculiar obligations to exemplary purity in heart and life, as it moſt certainly does. And when this happens to be the caſe, of the greateſt and moſt conſiderable part of any religious ſociety, either a coldneſs and inattention to their common intereſt, will bring upon them an inſenſible, yet ſure diſſolution; or ſpiritual pride, envious emulations, angry contentions, and uncharitable ſeparations tear them to pieces, to the great diſhonour of the chriſtian name; and the ruin of that chriſtian charity, which it is the particular deſign of ſuch inſtitutions to promote.

The intention of theſe papers therefore, is not *to cenſure* any *particular form* of church government, which obtains amongſt *proteſtants*; but to contribute, if poſſible, towards the cure of the above mention'd evils, where they *are*, the preventing them where they *are not*; and the advancement of

of *real piety* and *goodneſs* amongſt all:—for tho' I have endeavoured to give my reader as *ſcriptural a view* as I cou'd, of the *nature, form and order of a goſpel church*, as neceſſary to my deſign in general; yet what I have more largely and particularly inſiſted on, is, the *ends and duties of the chriſtian profeſſion in general*, and *church relation in particular*, (which are in the *main* the ſame in *all forms*)—That if poſſible I might engage his attention, to things *eſſential* to the being and growth of ſolid religion; moderate his zeal for meer modes and opinions; cheriſh his benevolence and charity with reſpect to other chriſtians. And if need be, convince him of the utter inconſiſtency of a bigotted narrowneſs of ſpirit, with the deſign of providence in making religion a *ſocial* intereſt and concern.

I hope therefore, inſtead of making what I here lay before him, an occaſion of wrangling diſputes about *church government* and *power*, &c. (which have too much troubled the church already) He will conſider it rather as a *compendious ſyſtem of chriſtian duties* acknowledged by all; the principal of

of which, he will find, under the ſeveral propoſitions relating to the work and buſineſs of a church, its officers and members; their reſpective qualifications, and what they owe to one another, to other churches, and to the world; and which I have given him from the ſcriptures, in words at length, not to prevent his looking into the bible, but to encourage him in that important duty, by convincing him, from theſe ſpecimens, of the excellency and uſefulneſs of *that divine book*, as graciouſly given us, for *reproof*, and *correction*, and *inſtruction*, in all *righteouſneſs*.

As to diſputable matters, not eſſential to religion, I have endeavoured to treat them with moderation, and deſire he would read them without prejudice, be open to conviction, and when he differs from me, do it with the ſame candour and charity with which I differ from him; and make the beſt of his *own plan*, in the ſupport and propagation of real piety and virtue, 'till he is convinced he has found a *better*.

I am ſenſible the more ſtudious and intelligent reader, is acquainted with many better treatiſes on this ſubject; but they are either ſo *large*, as not to come within the compaſs of the time and capacity, or ſo very *ſhort*, as not to anſwer the expectation or neceſſity, of the *common chriſtian*, for whom, *principally*, I write.—I have therefore endeavoured at a ſuitable medium, in a *method intirely new*; which I hope, though leſs *entertaining* to *ſome*, will not be found leſs adapted to the ſolid information, and *real ſervice* of thoſe, who are deſirous of being uſeful and ornamental members of any particular church of Chriſt, and are ſenſible of the want of ſuch help as is here intended them.—For, though I have not enter'd into the ſubject argumentatively, except here and there briefly in the notes, (as indeed my method and compaſs would not allow me to do) yet, if any plain chriſtian, will but properly exerciſe his own reflections upon the materials he here finds; and when neceſſary, take in the aſſiſtance of his more

more judicious friends, he will be able, not only to ſupply that deficiency, but anſwer the end of his enquiries, perhaps more to his ſatisfaction upon the whole, as he will be thereby led to his concluſions, not ſo much by meer *human* argument, as *divine* authority.

To conclude, as the civil, ſpiritual, temporal, and eternal happineſs of mankind, and the credit of our holy religion in the world, depend *ſo much* upon the *good order*, real *holineſs*, *ſincere and fervent charity*, *of chriſtian churches*; I moſt heartily wiſh they could, by any means, be prevail'd upon to attend to theſe important things, with more ſerious and cordial concern.—We our ſelves complain (and that juſtly) of coldneſs, formality, diſorder, and declenſions in vital religion, as prevailing amongſt us; *the free thinkers*, *and infidels* of the age, look upon *all* our churches, with the utmoſt contempt: and repreſent them as meer creatures of crafty prieſts, the *idols* of their infatuated

mobs, the ſupports of their tyranny and ambition; or little nurſeries of ſenſeleſs enthuſiaſm, bigotry, ſuperſtition, and mad zeal.—Would to God we had never given any occaſion for ſuch repreſentations! But, could we but once be brought to think, and act, agreeable to the true ſpirit and genius of the goſpel; to place religion, not in the *little noſtrums and peculiarities of a party*; *but in ſincere repentance towards God, lively faith in our Lord Jeſus, and the ſolid genuine fruits thereof in the works of piety, righteouſneſs, benevolence, charity*. — Inſtead of violently compelling one another to *uniformity* in leſſer matters, could we learn to *differ* in *opinions*, without *dividing* in *affection*; *oppoſe* one another in *meekneſs*, *forbear one another in love*, and receive with chriſtian tenderneſs the *weak in faith*; or, inſtead of ſpending our religious zeal upon *modes* and *forms*, and *things indifferent*, unite and employ it in promoting *real chriſtian knowledge*, and following after that *peace and holineſs*, without which *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*.—

Were

Were our churches all form'd upon ſuch principles, and actuated by ſuch a ſpirit, they would ſoon find (even though in other reſpects they continued ſtill in their different forms) the God of holineſs and peace dwelling amongſt them--- religion revive--- the goſpel miniſtry honour'd and bleſs'd. And thus, to their unſpeakable ſatisfaction and comfort, and the utter confuſion of the *ignorance of thoſe fooliſh men*, who delight to reproach them — they wou'd indeed appear to be, what they were originally deſign'd to be *, *ſeminaries* of divine knowledge, truth, love, piety, and every virtue---Living witneſſes of the great mercy and love of God to men.--- The brighteſt ornaments of the world, and the greateſt bleſſings to it.

Abingdon (Berks)
26 Jan. 1758.

* Pſal. xlv. 9, &c. Pſal. xlviii. 3. Pſal. lxxxvii. 2, 3. Epheſ. ii. 21. Phil. ii. 15, 16. Rev. i. 20. Chap. xxi. 2. to the end, will abundantly illuſtrate and confirm theſe ſentiments.

P. S.

P. S. The reader is desired to observe--- That several of the texts produced, are not intended as *direct proofs* of their respective propositions, but rather as *illustrations* only. --- And that the few things quoted from *Clemens*, and *Ignatius*, &c. are design'd just to hint the simplicity of those times, and how nearly the constitution of *their* churches agreed with that which we find in the holy scriptures, and which in the following pages is (I think) *delineated* from them. (They that wou'd see more of this may consult *Lord King's Enquiry.*)

And lastly, though argument was not my design, yet I have been oblig'd to add a few things in that form here and there by way of note, as necessary to explain and defend my meaning; which I have done with a sincere design of promoting the *interest* of *truth*, and the *honour* of *religion*, without regard to any *party* whatsoever;--and which therefore I would have understood, as illucidating

cidating hints, rather than peremptory dictates; or as propoſals of my preſent ſentiments, to the conſideration of the more judicious and candid reader.

A COM-

general ſenſe; as *Acts* xix. 32, 39, 41. where it is tranſlated *aſſembly*, and denotes not only a *lawful court of judicature*, as ver. 39. but alſo the *diſorderly multitude* brought together by *Demetrius*, ver. 32. and 41. Tho' for the moſt part the ſacred writers intend by it a *religious ſociety* or congregation. And thus ſometimes it ſtands—

I. For the *whole number of real ſaints, and peculiar people of God*, who ſincerely love and obey him, which is properly and eminently THE CHURCH, the myſtical *Body* of Chriſt, given him by the Father before the world began — purchaſed with his own blood; called, ſanctified, preſerved by his word and ſpirit in time, and glorified with him in eternity—Which may be called the real or *inviſible catholic* or univerſal *church*; part of which is triumphant in heaven, and part militant on earth *.

Heb. xii.

in that ſenſe in the New Teſtament as I remember, except 1 *Cor.* xi. 18. *be ſo underſtood.*--The *People* are called the *houſe* and *church* of God, 1 *Tim.* iii. 15.—*Vitringa, de ſynag. vet. part.* 1. *chap.* i. *&c.* has a long and elaborate diſſertation on the word εκκλησια. See alſo *Spanhem. Dub. Evan.* vol. 2d. *Dub.* 77.

* We have reaſon to believe that there are many true and proper members of the *church*, taken in this ſenſe, that are not actually join'd in church-fellowſhip to any particular chriſtian ſociety.

Heb. xii. 23. *The general assembly and church of the first born.* — Col. i. 18. *And he is the head of the body, the church.* John xvii. 2. *That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* Ehes. i. 4. *Chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.*—Acts xx. 28. *The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.* 2 Thes. ii. 13. *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.* 1 Pet. i. 5. *Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* John xvii. 24. *I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.* Heb. xiii. 23. *The spirits of just men made perfect.* Ephes. iii. 15. *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

II. At other times the word *church*, denotes the *whole body* of those that make any *visible profession* of a religious regard to the revealed will of God, and subjection to his more special authority, and government; whereof some have the *real power*, others only the *form* of godliness: and which may

be called the *apparent* or *visible catholic* * *church.*

Heb. ii. 12. *In the midst of the church will I sing praise.* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 28. *The body is one---the church.* Ephes. iii. 10, 21. *Known by the church—Glory in the church.* Mat. xxv. 1, 2. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto ten virgins, five of them were wise, and five were foolish.* Mat. xx. 16. *Many be called but few chosen.* Mat. xxii. 11. *And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment.* See also Mat. xiii. 24. 30. But,

III. Sometimes the word *church* denotes only one *particular society* of christians, professedly devoted to God, according to the rules of the gospel, usually meeting for divine worship in one place; or to speak more exactly and fully—"A company of "persons professedly separating themselves "from the sinful ways of the world, in "obedience to the call of the gospel; be-"lieving in Christ as their Saviour, sub-"jecting themselves to him as their spiri-"tual

* By *Visible* is here meant, what falls under human cognizance and judgment, as before by *invisible*, the contrary.

" tual Lord and Ruler, voluntarily agreeing " together, to partake of the priviledges, " discharge the duties, and support the " means of christian faith, worship and " holiness; making the holy scriptures the " sovereign and infallible rule of their reli- " gious opinions and practice; uniting in " the same general form of government, " and usually meeting together at one and " the same time and place, for public reli- " gious exercises; which may be called a " *particular visible gospel church*, of which " there is frequent mention in the new " testament, and to which the following " rules and observations principally refer*.

* 1st. It is not to be supposed, that all who stand related to particular churches under the *formal* appearance of that spiritual relation, are members indeed of Christ's spiritual body.—2. The above particulars seem necessary to denominate any christian congregation, a true *orderly gospel church*; yet where the *essentials* are held, though there be defects in the form, it is to be esteemed a *true* though not an *orderly* church.—What *I* should call *essentials* to the constitution of a particular visible church—are—*The profession of — repentance towards God — sincere obedience to his laws — faith in Christ as the only Saviour — the hopes of pardon and eternal life, through his mediation and sacrifice,— submission to his word, as the sovereign infallible rule of religious faith and practice—with the public worship of one God, through one Mediator*, by *one Spirit*, in *the reverent use of the word, prayer, praise, and the two sacraments, or positive*

positive institutions, (viz.) *Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.*

Acts ii. 38, &c. *Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, for the promise is to you and your Children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call:—Then they that gladly received the word were baptized,—and there were added three thousand souls.—And they continued stedfast in the Apostle's doctrine, and breaking of bread and prayers;—and all that believed were together—praising God;—and the Lord added to the church such as should be saved.*

This is a short sketch of the first visible christian church, and the chief principles or articles of their association and unity; which may very well serve for a general plan of constitution to all churches.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Some general obſervations on the diſtinguiſhing characters, nature, and conſtitution of a particular goſpel church.

I. THAT a *particular goſpel church*, properly conſiſteth of ſuch a number of perſons only, as is ſufficient to anſwer the ends of church fellowſhip, and may *uſually* meet and worſhip together at the ſame time, in one convenient place *.

* *N. B. 1ſt.* The above deſcription of a particular goſpel church, is not very different from that in the *19th article of the Church of England*; viz. "a *congrega-*" *tion* of faithful men, in which the true word of God "is preached, and the Sacraments duly adminiſtred, "according to Chriſt's ordinances, in all thoſe things "that of neceſſity are requiſite to the ſame."

2dly. *Tertul.* (exhort. de Caſt. chap. vii.) ſays *Ubi tres eccleſia eſt*,—three make a church.—But the ſcripture has fixed no preciſe number.

3dly. That every ſuch *particular* church, is to be eſteemed a part of the *univerſal church*, or general body called by that name; and whether there be a few, or many of them at the ſame time in the world (if really churches

Gal. i. 22. *The churches of Judea*—— Acts viii. 1. chap. xiii. 1. *The church at Jeruſalem—at Antioch.* 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *All*

churches of Chriſt) they have *all* the ſame common head, faith, laws, powers, priviledges,—and therefore, though differing in leſſer matters, and not authoritatively ſubject to one another, *may* and *ought* to hold the Communion of Saints with each other, as the means of preſerving and cheriſhing the common unity of the univerſal Church,—*keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; not only in reſpect of themſelves, but all true chriſtians throughout the world. Their being formed into diſtinct communities, being only intended for their better edification, and not for the ſupporting *oppoſite* intereſts, and *little* eccleſiaſtical *Factions*, as too many ſeem to imagine. *Epheſ.* ii. 15, 21. *John* x. 16. (ſee the concluſion.)—And thus every regular *member* and *miniſter* of the word, in any *particular* church, is in fact a *member* and *miniſter* of the church *univerſal:* and though under ſpecial obligations to *that* particular church, yet hath a right to commune with, or miniſter to any *other* upon all proper occaſions.

4thly. Becauſe the Apoſtle ſays *the churches* in the plural 1 *Cor.* xiv. 34, and yet directs his epiſtle to the *church* in the ſingular, 1 *Cor.* i. 2. Some think there were *ſeveral* churches or congregations at *Corinth*, united under *one biſhop*, after the preſent *Dioceſian* form amongſt us.—But it ſhould be obſerved (1ſt.) there is no certain mention made of any *biſhop*, or even *elder*, in the church at *Corinth*; and 'tis queſtionable whether there were any ſuch officer, or officers, at that time appointed amongſt them; as this was not uſually done upon the firſt gathering of a church.

(2d.) That the Apoſtle wrote this epiſtle for *all* the churches, though he addreſſed it particularly to them. 1 *Cor.* i. 2.

(3d.) That

33. *All the churches of the ſaints.* Acts ix. 31. *The churches throughout Judea, Galilee, Samaria.* Rom. xvi. 5. *The church*

(3d.) That as the members of the *corinthian church*, were ſcattered up and down the city, and its adjacencies, they might ſometimes occaſionally aſſemble in different places, and in diſtinct congregations for particular conveniency,—which aſſemblies might (in the more general ſenſe of the word) be called *churches*, yet more commonly, and upon all important and ſolemn occaſions, they might all meet at one *time* in *one place*; and from 1 *Cor.* xiv. 23. chap. xi. 18, 28. it is evident they *actually* did ſo.—And it ſeems ſo far from the genius of thoſe times, to unite *ſeveral churches* under *one biſhop*, that we find *one* church had *ſeveral* biſhops; Acts xx. 16, 18. *Philip* i. 1. The like may be noted in objection to the ſtrict *preſbyterian* form of government.

5thly. The main queſtion I apprehend here is, whether *one particular congregation of Chriſtians*, who might meet together with all their officers in *one place*, at *one time*, for the ends of church-fellowſhip; or *ſeveral ſuch* congregations, who could not all ſo meet in one body, and yet were otherwiſe united under *one epiſcopal* or *preſbyterial* form of government, be properly a *goſpel church?*—— Towards the juſt ſolution of which it may not be amiſs to note farther,

(1ſt.) That the number of chriſtians at *Epheſus* was very great in a little time after the goſpel was preach'd there, as appears from *Acts* xx. 31. chap. xix. 10, 20. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 8, 9. And that 'tis probable they ſometimes met in different parts of the city, in little diſtinct congregations; as for inſtance in the houſe of *Aquila*, where was a *church* as 'tis called, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 19. compared with *Acts* xviii. 18, 19, 26.—And yet, for aught appears to the contrary, the whole might meet together in *one place* at *once*.—The whole is called *the church of Epheſus*, over which the Holy Ghoſt had ſet

ſeveral

ſeveral elders or *biſhops.* Acts xx. 17, 28. And though in the apoſtle *John*'s time one of them might by common conſent be the *chief* or *preſident*, and therefore perhaps called *the angel of the church of Epheſus* (as *Rev.* ii. 1.) yet they might ſtill be all of the ſame order and authority. —From *Epheſus* the goſpel ſpread over *Aſia.* Acts xix. 10. And ſeveral *churches* were conſtituted at no great diſtance from it, which notwithſtanding are not ſpoken of in the Scripture, as *ſubject* to the *church there*, or conjoined with it in the preſent *Dioceſian* or *preſbyterian* form. And though it be allow'd,

(2d.) That the church at *Jeruſalem* at the time ſpoken of in the acts of the Apoſtles, conſiſted of a great multitude. *Acts* i. 15. We read of 120. *Acts* ii. 41. of 3000 more. *Acts* iv. 4. of 5000 more. *Acts* v. 14. of multitudes. *Acts* xxi. 20 of many thouſands of Jews who believed.—yet it ſhould be obſerved alſo that great numbers of theſe converts were only *occaſionally* at Jeruſalem, at the time of their converſion; as appears from *Acts* ii. 9, 10.--They are ſtiled the church in the ſingular. *Acts* ii. 47. chap. viii. 1. chap. v. 11. chap. xv. 4.—This church or multitude are called together; *Acts* vi. 2. and chap. xxi. 22.—This church is ſaid to receive the deputation from Antioch, *Acts* xv. 4. And the *whole church*, as diſtinguiſh'd from the apoſtles and elders, is ſaid to conſent to the decree, ver. 22.—This church had *ſeveral elders*, as appears, *Acts* xi. 30. chap. xxi. 18. Amongſt theſe the apoſtle *James* indeed is *particularized*, but no mention made of any *epiſcopal* power, that he exerciſed over the reſt; though it is probable he did occaſionally *preſide* at their meetings of buſineſs. Nor does it appear to me that this church conſiſted of ſeveral diſtinct congregations, with their *reſpective Preſbyters*, *united* under *one* proper *preſbyterial government*; otherwiſe than that the ſeveral

elders

xiv. 23. *If therefore the whole church be come together in one place.*

II. Such

elders of this church might occaſionally meet together, as a committee of the church, under the preſidence and direction of the apoſtolical authority, to prepare matters for a general conſideration and conſent; as 'tis plain they did, *Acts* xv. 6, 22.—And thus upon the whole, it appears to me.—

3d. That though the churches of *Corinth*, *Epheſus*, *Jeruſalem*, &c. were very large, and ſometimes might meet in diſtinct bodies, in ſeveral parts of their reſpective cities;—yet at other times, in matters of general concern, they met at *once*, in *one place* there. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 23.—And that if it had been the apoſtolic practice, to unite the ſeveral diſtinct congregations with their officers, in one *epiſcopal* or *preſbyterial government*, *all* the churches in *Judea* would naturally have been included and formed into *one* ſuch church.—Thoſe of *Aſia* into *another*, &c. and then we ſhould have read of the *church* of *Judea*, the *church* of *Aſia* (as we do now of the *church* of *England*, and the *church* of *Scotland*) inſtead of the *churches* of *Judea*, *Aſia*, &c. as we *do* read.

(4) Nor does it appear to me from the apoſtolic fathers *Clemens* or *Ignatius*, that a goſpel church in *their* time was any other than *one ſingle congregation*, uſually meeting in *one place* at *one time*; or that a biſhop *then* was any other than the *preſident*, *elder or paſtor* of ſuch ſingle congregation; though if the congregation was large there were more than one ſuch officer; St. *Ignatius* particulary ſpeaks of the philadelphian church, as having ἐν θυσιαστηριον, ὡ ἑις επισκοπος, ἁμα τω πρεσβυτεριω κ τοις Διακονοις, i. e. *one altar, as one biſhop, together with the preſbytery and deacons.*—Ep. ad. Philad. ch. iii. vid. Ep. ad. Tral. ch. i, ii. Quotations might eaſily be multiply'd to the ſame purpoſe. See chap. iii. prop. v. and notes there.—But I apprehend if *all things be done decently* and in *order*, to *edification*; or ſo as to ſecure the

main

II. Such a church, is a body *diſtinguiſhed* from the *civil ſocieties* of the world, by the *ſpiritual* nature and deſign of its conſtitution and government; and avowedly *ſeparated* from, and *oppoſed* to the uſurped kingdom and power of ſatan in the world: the members of this body profeſſedly renouncing the ſinful practices and maxims of the world, and devoting themſelves to God through Chriſt, in obedience to the call of the goſpel.

John

main ends of SOCIAL RELIGION, and the advancement of the intereſt of true piety and virtue; the meer *form* and *manner* of doing them, cannot be of that *vaſt* importance, ſome people imagine: though that which is moſt ſimple and practicable, one would think, ſhould be always prefer'd; as beſt agreeing with the genius of the goſpel, and the original plan pointed out to our imitation by the practice of the apoſtles, and their immediate ſucceſſors.

1. The *church* or *kingdom of Chriſt*, is very different from the *kingdoms* of this *world*.—The *church* is a *ſpiritual* ſociety, whoſe honours, privileges, and buſineſs, are of a *ſpiritual* nature—Whereas the *kingdoms* of *this* world relate to the *temporal* buſineſs, rights and privileges of mankind. Yet,

2. No particular congregation of chriſtians, or the whole chriſtian church, is to be underſtood as a ſociety *independent* on, or *contradiſtinct* from the ſtate, or civil government of the country where it exiſts, in any civil reſpects; or in regard of any of the duties the members thereof would *otherwiſe* owe thereunto, *Rom.* xiii. 1, 2. &c. But is oppoſed to the *moral pollutions*

lutions and *wickedneſs* of the world; i. e. their eccleſiaſtical confederation muſt be always conſiſtent with their obligations as men, and with all their natural and political relations in life. — Or in a word, the *church* is neither the *creature* nor the *rival* of the ſtate; but though a *ſpiritual kingdom*, and in that reſpect *not of this world*—Yet, while in it, is ſubject to all thoſe *juſt laws and powers* that God has ordained for the good government of the world. See chap. iv. prop. iv. ſect. 5.

3. It may alſo be farther noted, that this deſcription agrees to all profeſſing chriſtians in general, whether actually aſſociated in church-fellowſhip or no.—They are, by that very profeſſion, to be reckoned under a different denomination from the reſt of the world. But it is more particularly and eſpecially the caſe of every regular chriſtian ſociety. And the reader is deſired to obſerve the ſame in reſpect of the application of ſeveral of the ſcriptures hereafter quoted.

4. Let it be farther particularly obſerved, That the *papal church of Rome*, which claims the title of the HOLY CATHOLICK CHURCH, excluſive of all others, is the moſt inconſiſtent of all with the ſcripture account of a *goſpel church:* and indeed in moſt things *eſſential* to the conſtitution, unity, deſign, and purity of that *holy body*, *directly oppoſed* to it. Witneſs her pretended infallibility— The ſupremacy of her *pope*—Her arrogant claim of power over the conſciences of men, and even the ſcriptures of God—Her affectation of worldly pomp and grandeur, and endeavours to ſupport it by the arts of carnal and wicked policy—Her moſt abominable idolatries and ſuperſtitions; and her cruel and bloody perſecutions of the ſincere lovers, and conſcientious followers of Jeſus Chriſt.—So that even the *world* itſelf, in the *bad* ſenſe of the word, or as the *kingdom of ſatan*, is not more directly oppoſed to the *true* church of Chriſt, than *this church of Rome*; I mean as a *Church*, for I ſpeak not of every individual in her outward communion.

John

John xviii. 36. *My kingdom is not of this world.* See 2 Cor. x. 4: 2 Cor. vi. 17. *Come out from amongſt them and be ye ſeparate.* John xvii. 16. *They are not of the world even as I am not of the world.* John xv. 19. *I have choſen you out of the world.* Rom. xii. 2. *And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.* Heb. xi. 13, 15, 16. *And confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth--ſeeking a better country, even an heavenly.* Phil. iii. 20. *Our converſation is in heaven.* 2 Theſ. ii. 13, 14.---*Salvation, whereunto he called you by one goſpel.* 1 Pet. ii. 9. *An holy nation, a peculiar people,---called out of darkneſs into marvellous light.* 1 Cor. i. 2. *Sanctified in Chriſt, and called.* See Col. i. 13. Acts xxvi. 18. *To turn them from the power of ſatan unto God.*

III. They own Chriſt as their *only Saviour and Sovereign* of their *conſciences*; and his word as the only perfect and infallible rule of their faith and practice, in matters of religion.

Mat. i. 21. *He ſhall ſave his people from their ſins.* Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there ſalvation in any other.* Iſa. xlv. 21. *A juſt God, and a Saviour, and there*

there is none beside me. Gal. iii. 26. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* Rom. x. 9. *If thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus thou shalt be saved.* Mat. xxiii. 9. *For one is your master, even Christ.* Acts x. 36. *He is Lord of all.* Col. i. 18. *He is the head of the body, the church.* Isa. viii. 20. *To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to* this *word, it is because there is no light in them.* Mat. xv. 9. *In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Gal. vi. 16. *As many as walk by this* rule, *peace be upon them.* See also Ephes. ii. 20. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

IV. Such a church is a *voluntary society* *, formed

* By a *voluntary society*, here, I don't mean that men are under no obligation to embrace the gospel when propos'd to them—Nor that it is a matter of indifference, whether (having embraced the gospel as a divine revelation) they join themselves to any christian society; for these are both evident, though not equally important duties: But I mean that the embracing the christian religion in general, and the connecting ourselves with some christian society in particular, should be matter of *rational choice*, and not of *compulsion*; the effect of *inward convictions*, and not *outward violence*. Nor does this proposition respect the church in general, but the constitution of *particular* societies.

formed by mutual agreement and confederation---profeſſion of the ſame general articles of faith, and order--ſubmiſſion to Chriſt by the ſame common ſign or token of devotion to God, viz. *baptiſm* with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, giving themſelves up to the Lord and to one another in the Lord, meeting together at time and place appointed for religious worſhip, as frequently and conſtantly as is convenient and neceſſary to anſwer the ends of public religion.

1. It is a voluntary ſociety, formed by mutual agreement, &c. *

Acts ii. 44. *And all that believed were together*, ver. 46. *with one accord.* Rom. xv. 7. *Receive ye one another.* Iſa. lxiv. 5. *One ſhall ſay I am the Lord's—and another ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand unto the Lord.* Rom. xv. 6. *That ye may with one mouth glorify God.*

2. Pro-

* So that a perſon becomes a member of any particular church, by his propoſing or declaring his deſire and willingneſs to unite with it in the order of the goſpel, and to hold communion with it in all its ſpecial ordinances; and by the members of the church ſignifying their acceptance of the propoſal. And as this very tranſaction implies in it the nature of a *covenant*, or *mutual compact* and *ſtipulation*, for all the reſpective duties and privileges of that relation:—It appears to me therefore *ſufficient* for the purpoſe, without a *formal* aſſent and conſent to a *written covenant*.

2. Profeſſion of the ſame general faith and order **.

Epheſ. iv. 5. *One Lord, one faith.* 1 Cor. i. 10. *I beſeech you brethren that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions amongſt you, but that you be perfectly joined together in one mind, and one judgment.* 2 Cor. 9. 13. *Your profeſſed ſubjection to the goſpel of Chriſt.*

3. Submiſſion to the ſame token of devotion to Chriſt, *viz. baptiſm.*

Epheſ. iv. 5. *One baptiſm.* Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* Gal. iii. 27. *As many as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.* Acts viii. 12. *And when they believed, they were baptized, both men and women.* Acts viii. 36. *See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?* See chap. ii. prop. viii. ſect. 3. note.

** 2. Without ſome *tolerable* agreement in ſentiments in reſpect of the *eſſential* articles of the chriſtian faith, there can be no proper ſocial unity, and very little edification and comfort expected in a church relation.—Though great care ſhould be taken not to impoſe *unſcriptural terms* of communion, or to inſiſt upon a uniformity in every little nicety, about the meer circumſtances of faith and worſhip; for elſe ſome weak, ſincere conſciences muſt be hurt, or the peace and unity of the church be broken.—See prop. v. ſect. 3.

4. Giving themſelves to the Lord, and one another * in the Lord.

2 Cor. viii. 5. *But firſt gave themſelves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God.* Rom. xv. 7. *Receive ye one another.* Acts v. 14. *Believers were added to the Lord.*

5. Meeting together at one time and place for religious worſhip, as frequently and conſtantly as may be convenient and neceſſary to anſwer the ends of public religion.

1 Cor. xiv. 23. *If therefore the whole church be come together in one place.* Heb. x. 25. *Not forſaking the aſſembling ourſelves together as the manner of ſome is.*

V. The *eſſence* of church-fellowſhip lies, in partaking of the ſame ſpirit and grace of Chriſt——ſtanding in the ſame relation to him---enjoying his ſpiritual preſence in the ſame ordinances --- performing the ſame common duties, with unity of heart and affection

* That is, they profeſs to devote themſelves to the ſervice of God, and profeſs to receive, and treat one another as chriſtians, and brethren in the faith and hope of the goſpel.

affection --- and in the expectation of the ſame glorious immortality *.

1. In partaking of the ſame ſpirit of Chriſt.

1 Cor. vi. 17. *He that is joined to the Lord is one ſpirit.* John i. 16. *And of his fulneſs have all we received, and that grace for grace.* Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* Iſa. lix. 21. *This is my covenant with them, ſaith the Lord, my ſpirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, ſhall not depart for ever.*

2. Standing in the ſame relation to him. Gal. iii. 28. *You are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.* 1 Cor. xii. 13. *For by one ſpirit we are all baptized into one body.* Rom. xii. 5. *So we being many are one body in Chriſt, and every one members of one another.* Rom. viii. 17. *If children then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt.*

3. Enjoying his ſpiritual preſence, in the ſame ordinances, and performing the ſame common duties, with unity of heart.

1 Cor. x. 16, 17. *The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt?—The bread which we break is it not the communion of the*

* By *eſſence* here, I mean the main ground and reaſon on which church fellowſhip depends, and that in which it chiefly conſiſteth, or ought to conſiſt.

body of Chriſt?——for we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of one bread. Acts ii. 42. *And they continued ſtedfaſt in the apoſtles doctrine, and fellowſhip, breaking of bread, and in prayers.* Acts i. 14. *They all continued with one accord in ſupplications and prayers.* Acts iv. 32. *The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and one ſoul**. Mat. xxviii. 20. *Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. *All eat the ſame ſpiritual meat---all drink the ſame ſpiritual drink.*

4. And in the expectation of the ſame glorious immortality.

Epheſ. iv. 5. *One hope of your calling.* Col. i. 27. *Chriſt in you the hope of glory.*

* And therefore it appears to me that the forms and modes of worſhip obſerved in every church, ſhould be as *plain* and *ſcriptural* as poſſible: that none who are weak, yet ſincere, may be embarraſſed and ſtumbled,—nor any occaſion of contention and diſcord be adminiſtred;—yet on the other hand, none ſhould indulge a whimſical nicety about things indifferent; but all endeavour to practice mutual forbearance and charity;—for though in our preſent ſtate of imperfection it is impoſſible we ſhould be all of *one opinion* or judgment, in every point of religion; yet we may be *one* in true chriſtian *condeſcenſion, affection and love*;— and to that our common relation to Chriſt, participation of his ſpirit, and hope of eternal life oblige us. See *Epheſ.* iv. 3, 6. See prop. iv. ſect. 2d. note there, and the concluſion.

glory. Tit. ii. 13. *Looking for that bleſſed hope.* Heb. iii. 1. *Partakers of the heavenly calling.* Gal. v. 5. *For we through the ſpirit wait for the hope of righteouſneſs by faith.*

VI. The chief *ends* of church fellowſhip are---the preſervation of the faith, worſhip, and bleſſings of the goſpel in their power and purity — The ſupport and encouragement of the public miniſtry of the word, for the converſion of ſinners, and the edification of the ſaints — And the continual manifeſtation of the wiſdom, power, grace and glory of God by Chriſt in the world.

1. The preſervation of the faith of the goſpel.

Rom. iii. 2. *To them were committed the oracles of God.* Phil. i. 27. *Striving together for the faith of the goſpel.* 1 Cor. xi. 2. *And keep the ordinances as I have delivered them unto you.*

2. The ſupport and encouragement of a publick miniſtry, for converſion and edification.

Epheſ. iv. 11. 12. *He gave ſome apoſtles ſome prophets---ſome paſtors and teachers for the work of the miniſtry---for the edifying the body of Chriſt.* Pſal. lxxxvii. 5. *And of Zion it ſhall be ſaid, This and*

that man was born in her. 1 Pet. i. 23. *Born, not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible by the word of God.* ver. 25. *And this is the word, which by the goſpel is preached unto you.*

3. For manifeſting the grace and glory of God in the world.

Epheſ. iii. 10. *To the intent that now might be made known, by the church, the manifold wiſdom of God,* ver. 21.--- *To him be glory in the church, by Jeſus Chriſt* *. Rev. i. 20.

VII. The chief *advantages* of church fellowſhip, are drawing near to God in ſpecial ordinances,—and that under ſpecial promiſes of his preſence, and bleſſing,—the having many ſpecial obligations and encouragements to holineſs;—from their own ſolemn vows and promiſes; the care, watchfulneſs, admonitions, counſels, prayers, example; and all other ſpiritual aſſiſtance of their miniſters and fellow members; to which they have a ſpecial right and title,—together with a joint intereſt in all the temporal

* Theſe and many other paſſages of ſcripture, tho' ſpoken of the church in general, are applicable to particular churches as parts of the whole, under the ſame government and bleſſing; and conſtituted and preſerved in a viſible form for the ſame general ends. *Rev.* i. 20. *And the ſeven candleſticks are the ſeven churches.*

ral poſſeſſions of the church,—and ſuch ſupport and relief, as they may through poverty at any time have occaſion for, and the church is able to give them.

1. Drawing near to God in * ſpecial ordinances.

> Pſal. lviii. 2. *To ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have* ſeen thee *in the ſanctuary*; Pſ. lxxxiv. 4. *bleſſed are they that dwell in thy houſe*; Pſ. lxv. 4. *bleſſed is the man whom thou cauſeſt to dwell in thy courts,---we ſhall be ſatisfied with the* goodneſs *of thy* houſe;---1 Cor. x. 16. *the cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt? the bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt?*

2. Under ſpecial promiſes of his preſence and bleſſing.

> Pſal. lxxxvii. 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, v. 5.---*The higheſt himſelf ſhall eſtabliſh her*, Iſa. lix. 21. *My ſpirit, and*

* The more ſpecial ordinances under the goſpel, are *baptiſm, the Lord's Supper*, and *church diſcipline*; which properly belong only to ſuch as more particularly and ſolemnly devote themſelves to God in church communion.—The reſt ſuch as *hearing the word, public prayer and praiſe*, belong to all in common that are willing to attend them; being the appointed means of their inſtruction in, and converſion to the faith and holineſs of the goſpel.

my word ſhall not depart out of thee :--- Mat. xviii. 20. *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them.* Pſal. cxxxii. 15. *I will abundantly bleſs her proviſions, and ſatisfy her poor with bread.* Pſal. xcii. 13, 14. *Thoſe that be planted in the houſe of the Lord ſhall flouriſh in the courts of our God;---they ſhall bring forth fruit in old age;---they ſhall be fat and flouriſhing.* Jer. xxiii. 4. *I will ſet ſhepherds over them that ſhall feed them; neither ſhall they be lacking, ſaith the Lord.* Pſ. cxxxii. 13. *For the Lord hath choſen Zion, he hath deſired it for his habitation.* 2 Cor. vi. 16. *For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them,* &c. *Epheſ.* ii. 21, 22.

3. Special obligations to holineſs.

1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?--if any man defile the temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* chap. vi. 19.

4. From their own ſolemn vows and promiſes.

Judges xi. 35. *I have opened my mouth to the Lord. and cannot go back.*---Pſ. lvi. 12 *Thy vows are upon me O God: I will render praiſes unto thee.* *See* Deut. xxiii.

xxiii. 21, 22. Pſ. lxxvi. 11.---2 Tim. ii. 19. *Let him that nameth the name of Jeſus depart from iniquity.* Rom. vi. 3, 4.

5. The ſpiritual aſſiſtance of their miniſters and fellow members.

Jer. iii. 15. *And I will give you paſtors which ſhall feed you with knowledge and underſtanding.* James v. 16. *Pray for one another;--the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Heb. x. 24. *Conſider one another to provoke unto love and good works.* Pſ. cxli. 5. *Let the righteous ſmite me it ſhall be a kindneſs;---let him reprove me it ſhall be an excellent oil.*

6. Joint intereſt in the churches poſſeſſions, and charitable relief when needed.

Acts ii. 44, 45. *All that believed were together and had all things in common,* * *and ſold their goods and poſſeſſions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* Mat. xxvi. 11. *Ye have the poor always with you.* Gal. ii. 10. *We remember the poor.*

VIII. The

* This common intereſt *now* muſt not be underſtood of private property, but only of ſuch eſtates, and poſſeſſions as belong to the church, as a body or ſociety. See note chap. v. prop. 1. and that no farther than the *public* uſes and advantages ariſing therefrom.

VIII. The chief *work and buſineſs* of a church, lies in a due regard to the ordinances of divine worſhip, and godly diſcipline.

Rev. xxii. 9. *Worſhip God.* Epheſ. iii. 21. *To him be glory in the church.* 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40. *Let all things be done to edifying,---decently and in order.*

I. Divine worſhip in the church conſiſteth,---in prayer with thankſgiving,---ſinging the praiſes of God,---due adminiſtration of, and attendance upon the word and ſacraments,---and contributions to the neceſſity of the ſaints.---

1. Prayer with thankſgiving.---

1 Tim. i. 1. *That firſt of all ſupplications, prayers and giving of thanks be made for all men.* 1 Tim. ii. 8. *I will that men* pray *every where.* Acts i. 14. *Theſe all continued with one accord, with prayer and ſupplication.* Phil. iv. 6. *By prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſt be known unto God.* Pſ. l. 14. *Offer unto God thankſgiving.* Acts xii. 5. *But prayer was made of the church.*

2. Singing the praiſes of God.---

Pſ. xcv. 1. *O come let us ſing unto the Lord.* Pſ. cxlix. 1. *Sing unto the Lord a new ſong, in the congregation of ſaints.* Epheſ. v. 19. *Speaking to your ſelves in pſalms and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs, ſinging and making melody in your hearts*

to

to the Lord. So Col. iii. 16. Mat. xxvi. 30. *And when they had ſung an hymn.*

3. Attendance upon the due adminiſtration of the word and ſacraments *.

Mat.

* That *baptiſm* and the *Lord's Supper*, are divine inſtitutions deſigned to continue through all the ages of the church in this world, *muſt*, one would think, plainly appear to every conſiderate unprejudiced reader of the ſcriptures.

1. As to *baptiſm*. This rite was practiſed by *John the Baptiſt* at the firſt opening of the goſpel diſpenſation, to ſignify the *free remiſſion of ſins*, to all true penitents through faith in the Meſſiah; compare *Mat.* iii. 6, 7. with *Acts* ii. 38. *Chriſt* himſelf ſubmitted to this rite, as adminiſtred by *John*; not indeed with the ſame views, or to the ſame ends, with others; but as pointing out by his example, the duty of chriſtians in general:—He alſo gave his miniſters, a commiſſion and order, *to baptize all the nations they taught*, Mat. xxviii. 19. and from *John* iii. 5. compared with *Acts* ii. 38, 41. chap. viii. 12. *Heb.* x. 22. 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. It appears that being baptized was the common token of ſubjection to Chriſt, and neceſſary to a *regular* entrance into his *viſible church*:—And that this was underſtood of *water* baptiſm, is plain from the practice of the apoſtles and primitive miniſters. See *Acts* viii. 36, 37, 38. and *Acts* x. 47, 48. where *water baptiſm* is ſpoken of, as applicable to thoſe who had received (or been baptized with) the *Holy Ghoſt* before, and for that reaſon. And if this was to be practiſed in *all* nations where the goſpel was received, as our Lord declares; it muſt neceſſarily be a ſtanding inſtitution in the church.—And this will farther appear if we conſider that its *reaſons*, *ſignifications* and *uſes*, are in the main *always* the *ſame*; ſuch as *pardon* and *purification*, Acts ii. 38. *Acts* xxii. 16. 1 *Pet.* iii. 20, 21. *Heb.* x. 22. *Union* and *communion* with Chriſt, and *participation* of his ſpirit. 1 *Cor.* xii. 13, 14.

our

Mat. xvi. 15. *Go preach the goſpel to every creature.* Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father,* &c. Mat. xiii. 43. *Who hath ears to hear let him hear.* Acts xiii. 15, 16, 38, 44. *After the reading the*

our *ſubjection* to him *Gal.* iii. 27. the *likeneſs* of his *death* and *reſurrection*, and our intereſt therein. *Rom.* vi. 4, 8.

2d. As to the Lord's Supper,—he himſelf intimates that our eating and drinking therein is to be conſidered as an act of religious worſhip, being performed with prayer and thankſgiving, and a particular remembrance of him, and eſpecially his death. *Luke* xxii. 19. And this the apoſtle ſays he *received* of the Lord to deliver to the churches, and deſcribes the management of it. 1 *Cor.* xi. 23.—calls it the *Lord's Supper*, v. 20. ſays it is deſigned to *ſhew forth*, i. e. preſerve the lively remembrance of *the Lord's death* amongſt his people *'till he come*, v. 26.—That the communion of the bread and wine *ſignifies*, our participation of the benefits of his death, conſidered as a ſacrifice offered to God once for all, to take away our ſins, and give life to our ſouls; and that we are devoted to the ſervice, and made partakers of the favour of that God to whom it was offered. 1 *Cor.* x. 16, 18. He commands the Corinthians to keep the *ordinances*, particularly *this*, of which he was *then* ſpeaking, 1 *Cor.* xi. 2. *as he had delivered them.* And 'tis evident that the reaſons, ends, and benefits of this appointment, as much concern chriſtians in one, as in another age of the church; eſpecially the latter ages, as being more remote from the great tranſaction therein remembered and celebrated.—And it does alſo as particularly concern one church as another, for the apoſtle wrote not only to the Corinthians, but *to all that call upon the name of the Lord Jeſus.* 1 *Cor.* i. 2.

the law and the prophets,---Paul ſtood up and ſaid,---through this man is preached unto you forgiveneſs of ſins;---and the next ſabbath day came almoſt the whole city together, to hear the word of God.--- Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* 1 Cor. xi. 26. *As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death 'till he come.*

4. And contributions to the neceſſities of the ſaints.

Heb. xiii. 16. *To communicate forget not, for with ſuch* ſacrifices *God is well pleaſed.* 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. *Now concerning the collection for the ſaints,---upon the firſt day of the week let every one of you lay by him in ſtore.*---Acts x. 4. *Thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

II. Godly diſcipline, conſiſteth in due execution of the laws of Chriſt, given to the church, relative to the appointment of its officers.---The reception, government, and excluſion of its members, and the decent management of all its affairs to its edification.---

All which, with ſeveral other particulars, will be conſidered in the next chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Some obſervations and rules relative to the power, officers and duties of a chriſtian church.

1. THAT every particular church, rightly conſtituted, hath within it ſelf full power and authority from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for the exerciſing all eccleſiaſtical diſcipline, rule and government, and putting in execution all the laws of Chriſt, neceſſary to its own edification *.

Heb.

* 1. This right and power of particular churches ariſes from the very nature of their conſtitution, or their being free and voluntary ſocieties.— And this power is neceſſary to every particular church for its preſervation, and continuance in the form of a ſociety.

2. No church power, or authority, can abſolve or excuſe any from the obedience due to magiſtrates, and the juſt laws of their country, nor any way interfere with the ſame. Though when thoſe magiſtrates and laws incroach upon the natural rights of conſcience, we ought to *obey God* rather than *man*, Rom. xiii. 1. Acts iv. 19.

3. No church has any power from Chriſt, to puniſh the bodies, ſeize the property, or impriſon the perſons of offenders; or to impoſe any thing upon the

Heb. iii. 6. *Chriſt as a ſon in his own houſe.* Epheſ. i. 20, 22. *The head of all things to the church.* Mat. xviii. 15, 16, &c.

the conſciences of any of it's members. The authority of ſuch ſocieties conſiſting only in brotherly admonition, and reproof, or at moſt ſeparation from the ſpecial privileges of church fellowſhip with *themſelves*;—as is evident from the whole tenor of the rules and laws Chriſt has given them, and from the practice of the primitive chriſtians. Yet,

4. As there are ſeveral circumſtantial and incidental things, concerning the time, place, manner, &c. of worſhip, and the management of the meer externals of religion, not *expreſsly* provided for by Jeſus Chriſt, but left to human determination, and the prudential application of the general rule.—*Let all things be done decently and in order, to edification*; it neceſſarily follows, that churches have a power of preſcribing to themſelves ſuch particular methods, forms and rules, reſpecting theſe things, as they judge moſt agreeable to that general rule, and the ends propoſed in it.—And accordingly we read in the apoſtle's time of the *cuſtom* of the churches, 1 *Cor.* xi. 16. — Though no church has a power of binding ſuch forms, &c. upon the conſciences of thoſe that think differently about them.

5. But this power does not appear to me from the ſcriptures, to be given to the *biſhops or elders, without the people*, or to the *people*, without the *biſhops or elders*, but to the *whole body*, though an *executive* power, muſt, if there be any order, be neceſſarily lodged with the biſhops or elders, by conſent of the church. See chap. iii. prop. vii. ſec. 2. note, and prop. viii. And that this was the ſtate of the church with reſpect to the power of the people even in the third century, appears from many paſſages in the epiſtles of *Cyprian*, particularly. *Epiſt.* 14. *ſect.* 4. *p.* 33. *Bp. of Oxford's edit. and epiſt.* 67. *ſect.* 2. *page* 171, 172.

&c. *If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee tell him alone* (a) ;---*if he neglect to hear thee, take one or two more* ;---*if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the* CHURCH (b) ;---*if he neglect to hear the* Church, *let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.--Whatſoever* ye *bind* (c) *on earth ſhall be bound in heaven* ; *and whatſoever* ye *looſe on earth ſhall be looſed in heaven* ;---*for where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midſt of them.* Acts xv. 22, 25.---*It pleaſed the apoſtles and elders with the* whole church, *to ſend choſen men, ſaying, it ſeemed good unto* us, *aſſembled with one accord,* &c. 1 Cor. v. 4. *In the name of the Lord Jeſus, when ye* [*the church of Corinth*] *are gathered together, to deliver ſuch a one to Satan* (d). 2 Theſ. iii. 6. *We command* you *brethren that* ye *withdraw your ſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly.* Epheſ. iv. 11, 12. *He gave ſome apoſtles,---prophets,---paſtors, ---teachers for the edifying the body of Chriſt.* Acts vi. 3. *Bretheren look* ye *out from amongſt you ſeven men,* &c.

(*a*) This procedure of telling the offending brother of his offence *alone*, ſeems only to reſpect ſuch offences as may happen between man and man, or ſuch ſins againſt

II. Notwithſtanding the *independency* of particular churches, it is oftentimes *neceſſary* or at leaſt *prudent* for them, in order to the promoting the common intereſt of religion, their own mutual comfort, purity, and edification, to hold ſpecial correſpondence, and the *communion of ſaints* with each other, and unite their counſels by the *ſocial meeting* of their reſpective *elders* and *meſſengers* by

againſt God as are known to the offended brother, but not to others; and therefore muſt not be made a rule for more public offences.

(*b*) By the *church* here ſome will have it we are to underſtand the *ſanhedrim*, or ſome public court of civil judicature, which if the offender would not regard, he might be proſecuted in the Roman courts as if he was a meer heathen; and conſequently that this was a rule for the conduct of the diſciples at that preſent time only, and not for the conduct of a *chriſtian church*, which they ſay had no exiſtence when this rule was given.—To which it may be reply'd, That this is a very unwarrantable interpretation of the word εκκλησια in the caſe and circumſtances before us.—That it is very improbable Chriſt ſhould give his diſciples a rule in reſpect of an œconomy that was juſt going to ceaſe. But that it was no unuſual thing with him to ſpeak proleptically, or by way of anticipation, or give rules for the after conduct of his diſciples, as he evidently does in the 18th and following verſes. — That the power of the church here is at moſt rejection from their communion or brotherly relation, which does not agree with the nature of a civil court of judicature: And that as this paſſage is ſo evidently connected with the 18th and following verſes, the whole appears a very clear, conſiſtent and important declaration of the power and authority given to a chriſtian

by agreement; provided they assume no arbitrary jurisdiction, or decisive power and authority over any particular churches, or persons, nor attempt any thing prejudicial to, or inconsistent with, their just rights and liberties.

Acts xv. 2, 22. *They (of Antioch) determined that Paul and Barnabas, and others,*

church, and a rule for the exercise of it, for its purity and edification. Though supposing this, I don't see that any church can from hence claim a power of excommunication against its members, for any differences amongst them, where *only* human frailty, and not real immorality appears, as is too often the case. See Dr. *Doddridge*'s note on this text, in his *Fam. Expos.*

(*c*) As to *the power of binding and loosing*, if it be understood of the church's censures, it can mean no more, I apprehend, than that so far as they are agreeable to the will of Christ and his laws, he will own them for the ends of their appointment.

(*d*) By *delivering to satan*, I suppose, some reference may be had to the punishment peculiar to those miraculous times and powers given to the church, or its extraordinary officers at least; (compare Act. v. 1—11. chap. xiii. 6, &c. 1 Cor. iv. 21. 2 Cor. x. 6, 8. chap. xiii. 10.) But as the world lying in wickedness from which the church is separated, is in a sense the *kingdom of satan*, so when any one is separated from the church, he is consequently return'd again to the world or kingdom from whence he came; and in that respect may be said to be *delivered to satan*; which is just the same thing as what our Lord calls, his being to us as an *heathen man and a publican.*—Though still he is to be treated with all christian compassion, and as having a right to all natural and civil duties and respect. See more chap. iii. under the head of *Excommunication.*

others, should go to Jerusalem; and it pleased the apostles, and elders, and the whole church [at Jerusalem] to send chosen men to Antioch—upon the question about circumcision * &c. Phil. i. 27. *Striving together for the faith of the gospel.* 1 Thes. ii. 14. *For* ye, *brethren, became followers of the* churches *in Judea.*

III. That there be some, one or more in every particular church, invested with official power, is necessary, and of divine appointment, for the due administration of the word and sacraments; the maintaining due order in the church, and due execution of the laws of Christ **.

* Thus in effect there was a *synodal assembly*, or *association*, held by the messengers, delegates, or deputies of the two first christian churches; one of *Jews* from *Jerusalem*, the other of *Gentiles* from *Antioch*; which I should think is sufficient to authorize some special communion of churches for advice and counsel.

** As some official power and authority, is of divine appointment, to continue in the church, till the whole be perfected; so there must of necessity be a succession of persons qualified for it and invested with it.—But which succession, as to what is essential to it, appears to me to depend intirely upon the presence of Christ; and the gifts and graces of his Spirit; the force of his laws, always continued in the church; and such an orderly exercise of the power he has given it, for the appointment and constitution of such qualified

Mal. ii 7. *The prieſts lips ſhould keep knowledge, and they ſhould ſeek the law at his mouth: for he is the meſſenger of the Lord of hoſts.* Prov. xxix. 18. *Where there is no viſion the people periſh.* Rom. x. 14. *How ſhall they hear without a preacher?* Epheſ. iv. 11, 12, *He gave ſome apoſtles, and ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers for the work of the miniſtry.* 1 Cor. xii. 28. *And God hath ſet in the church firſt apoſtles—ſecondarily prophets— Thirdly teachers, helps, governments.* Acts vi. 3. *Men whom we may appoint over this buſineſs* [of ſerving tables.] Tit. i. 5. *That thou ſhouldeſt ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.* 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able alſo to teach others.*

lified perſons, as its condition and circumſtances will admit; and which is as real and effectual in every *particular* church, as in the *whole* body, as to the ends of their *particular* edification, *Epheſ.* iv. 11, 16. And therefore as to the *popiſh notion* of an uninterrupted *perſonal* formal conveyance of that power, from one *officer* to another, in ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, it has no foundation as I can find in ſcripture, or the nature and reaſon of the conſtitution of a goſpel church; and is attended with ſuch darkneſs, and *abſolute uncertainty*, as is quite inconſiſtent with the ends of the appointment, and the faith and hope of the people of God.

2. Nothing

IV. That every particular church has a right of chusing their own officers **.

Acts xiv. 23. *And when they had ordained them* (χειροτονησαντες, i. e. appointing with the suffrage of the people)

2. Nothing can be more evident, than that in every church rightly constituted, there must be (under Christ) some one at least, appointed to *rule*, consequently the rest must be *ruled*.—The *rulers* are such by office—to them pertains the regular *execution* ONLY of the laws of Christ.—And so far as their administration agrees with the word of God, the rest are bound to obey, *Heb.* xiii. 17.—Though not to the prejudice of the rights of conscience and private judgment.—For, no church officer has any absolute legislative or *imposing* power given him by Christ. See prop. i. note 4. prop. vii. sect. 1. note 1. and elsewhere.

3. It is to be wished, that those churches, who allow themselves to continue long without a *settled ministry* amongst them, would seriously consider, how clearly the scriptures, cited under this proposition, not only point out its utility and importance, but prove it a *divine institution*; with which it must be very wrong and dangerous to trifle.—For though they may have occasional supplies, yet they have no right to expect the like measure of the divine presence and blessing from *them*, as from a *settled ministry*; nor indeed any blessing at all, if they use the former to the *sinful* neglect of the latter. — And how often is it found that hearing a variety begets confusion and discord; or at least a weak fondness for novelty, and a vague and unsteady conduct in religion? which renders their future settlement more difficult, and hazardous; keeps the well-disposed from their communion, and so every way weakens their interest and hastens their ruin.

elders in every church. Acts vi. 3, 5. *Brethren, look* ye *out from amongſt you ſeven men of honeſt report. --- And he ſaying pleaſed the* multitude, *and* they *choſe Stephen*, &c.

V. That

** 1. If the people have the power of election, in the leſs important office of a *deacon*, wherein their *temporal intereſt* is the principal concern, much more in that of a *biſhop*, *elder*, *or paſtor*, which ſo nearly affects their ſpiritual and eternal concern.—And if the *inſpired apoſtles* paid this regard to the natural rights and liberties of the people, one would think there was ſtill more reaſon for *us* to do ſo. From Acts xi. 22. and 2 Cor. viii. 19, 23. it alſo appears that the *people* choſe *extraordinary* miniſters, who therefore were called the *apoſtles of the churches* (for ſo the word αποστολοι might have been rendered.) And indeed even Matthias was elected to the apoſtolic office by the ſuffrage of the people, Acts i. 16. 23. See *Cyp. ep.* 67. *Bp. Oxf. ed.*

2. The word (χειροτονεω) amongſt the Greeks, *often*, though not *always*, denotes a *popular choice* to *office*, or ſome particular ſervice. So 2 Cor. viii. 19. χειροτονηθεις απο των εκκλησιων, *i. e.* choſen of the churches. So *Demoſt.* 1. *Phil.* ουδε θελης δ' ε δημος χειροτονησαντες αυτον, i. e. *neither the ſenate nor the people chuſing him.* St. Ignat. ep. ad Philad. ſays, πρεπον εστιν υμιν, ως εκκλησια θεου, χειροτονησαι διακονον εις το πρεσβευσαι εκει θεω πρεσβειαν, i. e. *It becomes you, as a church of God, to chuſe a miniſter to perform divine ſervice there* (at Antioch). And thus the word χειροτονεω, Act. xiv. 23. Though it is properly render'd *ordain'd*, as more particularly reſpecting the act of *Barnabas* and *Saul*; yet it *may* alſo include the choice and conſent of the people.

3. Even St. *Cyprian*, who lived in the middle of the third century, and had no mean opinion of the power of

V. That the ordinary officers of a church are (at leaſt) *biſhops* (ſometimes called *paſtors* and *elders*) and *deacons* *.

of the clergy, ſpeaks in the plaineſt terms of the peoples power in the elections of their biſhops, *Ep.* 68. *Sect.* 1. *of the Bp. of Oxford's edit.*——*Epiſcopo de Dei judicio, & cleri & plebis ſuffragio ordinato*, i. e. *Ordained biſhop by the will of God, and the ſuffrage of the the clergy, and the people.* Ep. 38. ſect. 1. *In ordinationibus clericis, fratres cariſſimi, ſolemus vos ante conſulere*, i. e. *In our miniſterial ordinations, we uſed, dear brethren, firſt to conſult you.* See alſo *epiſt.* 67. *ſect.* 2.

* 1. As to the *teachers* mentioned Epheſ. iv. 10. See alſo Rom. xii. 7. whether they were the ſame with the *paſtors*, or of a different order, and if ſo wherein the difference lies, is hard to determine; but I rather think the Apoſtle intends either the *tutors* and *catechiſts* in private ſchools, or elſe the meer *preachers* of the word, or perhaps both: but neither of which had any *paſtoral*, or *ruling* power or authority, in any particular church as ſuch, but were miniſters to the church at large.

2. As to *ruling elders*, not *paſtors* or *miniſters* of the word, it appears to me doubtful whether they are neceſſary by divine appointment, at leaſt to all churches; for, we find the word *elder* and *biſhop* (or *overſeer*) uſed promiſcuouſly to denote one and the ſame office in ſeveral places, as Acts xx. 17. They who are called *elders*, are verſe 28. called *overſeers* (or *biſhops.*) So Tit. i. 5, 6. compared with 1 Pet. i. 2. (where ἐπισκοπευντες refers to the *epiſcopal* office.) And the epiſtle to the *Philipians*, is addreſſed to the *ſaints* there, with the *biſhops* and *deacons*, without any mention of *elders*. The like may be obſerved, in the apoſtles direction to Timothy about church officers; and it is evident that there are many churches that have no occaſion for

1 Tim. iii. 1, 10. *The office of a biſhop--of a deacon.* Phil. i. 1. *To the ſaints at Philippi, with the biſhops and deacons.* Acts xx. 17. *He called the* elders *of the church,*

for ſuch an *office*, as diſtinct from that of the paſtoral. Yet on the other hand it may be urged, that in the nature of things, there ſeems to be as *real* an occaſion for *ſuch* an office in the larger churches, to aſſiſt the paſtor in government, as that of *deacons*, to aſſiſt him in the care of the poor. And we read of *helps-governments*—as diſtinct from *paſtors* and *teachers*, 1 Cor. xii. 28. Rom. xii. 7, 8. *Elders* alſo are mentioned Acts xv. 2. 4. 6. 22. as concerned with the apoſtles in managing the affairs of the church. And 1 Tim. v. 12. will bear an interpretation to the ſame purpoſe. Though after all, I muſt confeſs it is my preſent opinion that the office of a *meer ruling elder*, has no *certain* foundation in ſcripture — And as to an *epiſcopal order*, or juriſdiction, *ſuperior* to that of *elders*, I cannot find any thing like it in the *ſcripture account* of the matter. Acts xx. 17. 28. 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. Phil. i. 1. are, to me, demonſtrations to the contrary. See alſo Dr. *Whitby*'s notes on thoſe texts. And I may here add, that *Clemens Rom.* ſpeaks of *biſhops* and *elders*, as one and the ſame ſort of perſons, and of the ſame office and order. For in his firſt *Ep. ad Cor.* chap. 42. ſpeaking of the ordination of church officers, he mentions only *biſhops* and *deacons*, καθιςανον τας απαρχας αυτων--εις επισκοπους κ) Διακονους, i. e. *They* (i. e. the apoſtles) *ordained the firſt fruits of their miniſtry, for biſhops and deacons*, whom, chap. 57. he calls elders, υποταγητε τοις πρεσβυτεροις, i. e. *Be ye ſubject to the preſbyters or elders.* And chap. 1. of that epiſt. υποτασσομενοι τοις ηγουμενοις υμων. *Be ye ſubject to thoſe who have the rule over you.* Like that of the apoſtle Heb. xiii. 7. 17. which ſeems

to

church, and said to them—*Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you* overseers (*or* bishops) *and feed the church.* 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. *The elders I exhort*

to imply, they had more *rulers* in their church than one, and that they were what he elsewhere calls *bishops and elders.* And chap. 54. he speaks of *presbyters* set *over* the flock of Christ— το ποιμνιον—μελα των καθεσταμενων πρεσβυτερων—It must be acknowledg'd indeed that St. *Ignatius*, who lived in the apostolick times, and presided in the church of *Antioch*, mentions *bishops* and *elders* as distinct: Epist. ad Ephes. chap. 2. υποτασσομενοι επισκοπω και πρεσβυτεριω, i. e. *Be subject to the bishops and presbytery*—And chap. 4. πρεσβυτεριον—ετος συνηρμοσται τω επισκοπω ως χορδαι κιθαρα, i. e. *the presbytery so fitted to the bishops, as the strings to the harp.*—The like he says in many other places.—But even from him we cannot learn, of a *certainty*, any more than that some of the larger churches (such as Ephesus) had several presbyters or bishops.—That one of them usually presided, and was therefore called, by way of distinction, the BISHOP, (and sometimes πρωτος, præses, *præsident*, vid. Just. Mart. Apol. 2. p. 97.—) But that the other presbyters were still his equals, as to order and office, and his *collegues* or *joint pastors* and rulers of the church with him (called προισταμενοι, 1 Thes. v. 12.) And that this *bishop* and his *presbyters* had the care and charge but of *one christian society*, who usually met in *one place* of public worship, and received the Lord's Supper at one table. Vid. his *Ep. ad. Philiad.* chap. 3. &c. &c.

And it may be farther observed,

3. That the first mention we have of *elders* in the christian church, is Acts xi. 30. who (as those mentioned Acts xv. 4.) might not be so entitled from any special

exhort—Feed the flock of God --- taking the overſight thereof (επισκοπουντες) *willingly.* Tit. i. 5, 6, 7. *Ordain elders--- if any be blameleſs---for a biſhop muſt be blameleſs.*

VI. The

ſpecial office they had in the church, but from their *age*, or as to ſome of them, *becauſe* of their being *witneſſes* choſen by Chriſt, to ſee and teſtify his ſufferings and glory, 1 Pet. v. 1. And as to others of them, becauſe of their being the *firſt fruits* of the goſpel-miniſtry, and therefore of ſpecial eſtimation in the church, as is intimated 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. Theſe elders, under the apoſtles and evangeliſts, and in their abſence, would naturally have the affairs of the churches to which they belonged, ſubmitted to their management and care, until ſome more particular regulations could be thought on, and particular officers appointed, ſuch as *biſhops* and *deacons*; and who would naturally be choſen from amongſt theſe elders—which agrees with what the apoſtle hints, 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. and with what *Clemens* declares, 1 *Ep. ad Cor.* ch. 42. before quoted. So that it is by ſome very much queſtioned whether, in the apoſtolic times, there were any ordained TO BE *elders*, or inveſted with any office under that name. 'Tis ſaid indeed, Acts xiv. 23. that the apoſtles ordained *elders* [illegible].—But then it may be underſtood of thoſe who were *elders* before, in the ſenſe above; whom they ordained to be *biſhops* or *deacons* as the caſe required. So Tit. i. 5, 6. is explained. 1 Tim. iii. 1. 6. and chap. v. 17. See Dr. *Benſon's eſſay on the ſettlement of the primitive churches*, part 1. To the peruſal of which I (principally) owe this note.

4. I will here add a note, which ſhou'd have been introduced a little before, viz. that (it appears to me) the

VI. The officers of a church ſhould be qualified for---called and appointed unto---and ſignify their willing acceptance of their office, before they enter upon the exerciſe of it.

1. They are to be duly qualified for their office.

1 Tim. i. 7. *The* apoſtle condemns ſome, *for* deſiring *to be teachers---underſtanding neither what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm.* Pſal. l. 16. *But unto the wicked God ſaith, What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes?* 1 Tim. v. 22. *Lay hands ſuddenly on no man.*

The

the original of all official power in the church is in Chriſt the *ſupreme head*, and only *law-giver* to it.—That ſome *ſpecial* particular *qualifications*, (beſides common natural or acquired abilities and grace) are neceſſary to all ſuch power in the church.—That a regular call and appointment to office is alſo neceſſary to the orderly and authoritative exerciſe of thoſe qualifications, to the edification of the church, which is the end of their being beſtowed, Epheſ. iv. 11, 12. That Chriſt himſelf will take care to beſtow thoſe qualifications as long as he has a church in the world, more or leſs, as he ſees proper. And that the outward call, or choice of qualified perſons, he has left to his church, and their inveſtiture, to paſtors or elders. This note contains the ſum and ſubſtance of all I have ſaid concerning the nature, derivation, ſucceſſion, and uſe of eccleſiaſtical power in the church and its officers.

The qualification of a biſhop or elder.

1 Tim. iii. 2, 8. Tit. i. 6, 9. *A biſhop muſt be blameleſs, the huſband of one wife * juſt, holy, temperate, vigilant, ſober, well behaved, hoſpitable, apt to teach, not given to wine, no ſtriker, patient, not a brawler, not ſoon angry, not ſelf-will'd, not greedy of filthy lucre, or covetous; but one that ruleth well his own houſe;—having faithful children in ſubjection, and not accuſed of riot or unruly; not a novice, [in religion, or a new convert] having a good report of thoſe with-*

* *The husband of one wife*, i. e. neither guilty of *polygamy* (i. e. having ſeveral wives at once) nor of *divorce*, or the taking a ſecond wife before the death of the firſt; evils too common in thoſe times, both with Jews and Gentiles; and however borne with before the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, were nevertheleſs *ſins* againſt the divine inſtitution of marriage; and therefore *eminently* culpable, and ſcandalous, in a perſon who claimed ſo *ſacred* and *exemplary* a character, as that of a *biſhop* or *preſident* of a chriſtian church. And as this is ſo natural and eaſy an interpretation of the words, ſupported by critics and expoſitors of the greateſt abilities, 'tis ſurprizing that ſuch ingenious and learned writers as *Whiſton*, *Hallett*, and *others*, ſhould conclude from hence, that the apoſtle made the marrying a *ſecond* wife, after the *death* of the *firſt*, inconſiſtent with the character and office of a chriſtian biſhop; eſpecially as the apoſtle elſewhere allows of ſecond marriages, Rom. vii. 2. 1 Cor. vii. 8, 9, 17, 27, 28, 29. And there may be as many juſt and good reaſons for a ſecond marriage as the firſt. See Drs. *Doddridge* and *Benſon* on the place.

without (i. e. *the world*) *a lover of good, [men] holding faſt the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by ſound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince gainſayers.*

The qualifications of a deacon.

1 Tim. iii. 8, 12. *The deacons muſt be grave, not double tongued* [διαλογες, i. e. *deceitful, ſaying and unſaying*] *not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding faſt the myſtery of faith in a pure conſcience; and let theſe alſo firſt be proved, and then let them uſe the office of a deacon, being found blameleſs—even ſo muſt their wives be grave, not ſlanderers, ſober, faithful in all things; let the deacons be the huſband of one wife, ruling their children and their own houſes well.* Acts vi. 3. *Men of honeſt report, full of the Holy Ghoſt and wiſdom.*

2. They are to be * called to their work, by the grace and providence of God, and the election and approbation of the church.

Heb.

* 1ſt. In what follows, the reader will eaſily diſtinguiſh what is applicable to the *paſtor*, what to the *deacon*, and what to both in common.

2. In order to a *regular call* to the miniſtry, there ſhould be a due meaſure of thoſe gifts and graces, Chriſt has preſcribed, and beſtows, as qualifications for it; a ſincere and voluntary inclination, and ſelf-dedication to it; thoſe qualifications, and that inclination, ſhou'd

Heb. v. 4. *No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* Rom. x. 15.--*And how shall they preach except they be sent?* Acts vi. 3, 5. *Look ye out seven men;—and they Stephen,* &c. 2 Tim. ii. 2. *What things thou hast heard the same commit to faithful men, who shall teach others.*

3. They are to accept of their charge, not from worldly views, but of a sincere and willing mind.

1 Pet. v. 2. *Taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*

4. * They are to be ordained, or solemnly set apart and appointed to their work, (usually) ** by the assistance of other officers, of chief power and authority in the churches.

Rom.

shou'd be examined and approved by competent judges; and the candidate recommended to God, and his blessing, by solemn prayer,—which perhaps may be all that is necessary to the public preaching of the word;--but a farther trial, and more particular appointment must I think be *generally* necessary to the regular assuming and executing the pastoral office, if we would do all things *decently*, and in *order*, to the due *edification* of the church, the credit of religion, and the proper support of the ministerial character, and influence.

* See article 23 of the church of England.

** 1st. I say *usually* because I think it evident from the nature of things; that though *meer popular* ordinations are not so regular and agreeable to the apostolic

Rom. x. 15. *How ſhall they preach except they be ſent?* Tit. i. 5. *I left thee in Crete that* thou *ſhouldeſt* ordain *elders in every city.* Acts vi. 6. *Whom* (i. e. *the deacons*) *they* (i. e. *the* people) *ſet before the apoſtles---and when they* (*the* apoſtles) *had prayed they laid their hands on them.* Acts xiv. 23. *And when they* (*Barnabas and Paul*) *had ordained* (*with the ſuffrage of the people*) *elders in every church, and had prayed with faſting, they commended them to the Lord.*

VII. The

tolic practice, yet may perhaps, upon extraordinary occaſions at leaſt, be allowed as *valid*; for what is done in this caſe, and in ſuch circumſtances, with an upright heart, and intention, according to the general rules of the goſpel, we have reaſon to conclude will be attended with a divine bleſſing, and anſwer the *chief* ends of the chriſtian miniſtry:—but I ſpeak thus cautiouſly and with ſo many reſtrictions in favour of meer popular ordinations; becauſe I apprehend too great an indulgence here, would open the way for bold and forward men, to thruſt themſelves unqualify'd into the chriſtian miniſtry, the conſequence of which, muſt be the deſtruction of all public order in the church, and the bringing the public worſhip of God into contempt.

2d. Though it ſhould be granted that a *regular* authority to preach the word, and the right of exerciſing the paſtoral office, may not depend upon a *popular choice*, but rather be derived (as to the form, and ſo far as man is concerned in it) from thoſe poſſeſſed of office authority in the church.—Yet whether any perſon ſo appointed, ſhall exerciſe his office in and over any particu-

particular ſociety, muſt, ſurely, of *right* depend upon the conſent and approbation of that ſociety. See chap. iii. prop. i. Note 4. prop. iv. and prop. vi. and notes there. Prop. vii. ſect. iv. Prop. viii. and texts there.

But ſtill, whatever right the people have of *choice* in this caſe; it appears to me the proper province of the *biſhops*, *paſtors*, or *elders* to *ordain*, i. e. formally *appoint and ſet apart* to the *orderly* exerciſe of *any office* in the church:—becauſe we have no one inſtance in the ſcripture as I can find, of a MEER POPULAR ORDINATION; but all by officers of proper authority. So *Acts* xiv. 23. It was not the *people*, but *Paul* and *Barnabas* that *ordained* *, though by *their ſuffrage*, and with their approbation. *Acts* vi. 3, 6. The *apoſtles* claim this work as their prerogative, after the *people's* choice,—whom WE *may appoint*.—Whom therefore the church *ſet before* them, *and* they *laid their hands on them*, as a token of this appointment. And *Tit.* i. 5. The apoſtle ſays, *I left thee in Crete, that* thou *ſhouldeſt ordain* (καθιστης, *i. e.* appoint, conſtitute) elders in every city.—What occaſion for this, if the people had the power of ordination or appointment of their elders? and if they had no ſuch power *then*, I cannot ſee how they can have it *now*.—So 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. The apoſtle charges Timothy *what things thou haſt heard of me, commit* thou *to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others*.—See alſo *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. Where the prophets and teachers of the church of *Antioch* were the ordainers. Agreeable to this, *Clemens, epiſ. ad Cor.* chap. xliv. Says, the *biſhops and deacons were conſtituted:* συνευδοκησασης εκκλησιας πασης: — i. e. *the whole church conſenting*:—that is, they were appointed to their office, by other officers, the church concurring therein.—And by keeping to this primitive pattern, the rights and privileges of the people, and the authority and dignity of the miniſterial office, are both juſtly preſerved.—

3. As

* This ſenſe of the word χειροτονιεω the reader may ſee vindicated at large, *Stennett's Works*, vol. i. page 116, 120.

3. As to *impoſition of hands* in ordination, it ſeems to be at leaſt, a very convenient and proper rite upon ſuch occaſions; and as far as I can find conſtantly uſed in the primitive church;—as *lifting* up the hands in prayer, is a natural ſign of fervent deſire, and expectation of a bleſſing from heaven; ſo *laying* the hands *upon* the perſon prayed for, as naturally denotes the earneſt deſire and hope of his *ſpecial ſhare* in that bleſſing, or that it may be conferred upon him.—It is alſo a very fit ſign or token, of ſpecial appointment and deſignation to any particular buſineſs, office, or ſervice:—thus the witneſſes lay'd their hands on the blaſphemer, in token of his being juſtly devoted to death. *Lev.* xxiv. 14. thus the people of Iſrael (that is their repreſentatives) laid their hands on the *Levites*, in token of their ſeparation to divine ſervice. *Numb.* viii. 9, 10. And thus *Joſhua* was ſeparated to the office of commander in chief over Iſrael, in the room of *Moſes*. *Numb.* xxvii. 18, 23. And in the New Teſtament, we find the *deacons* ordained by laying on of hands. *Acts* vi. 5, 6. And that *Barnabas* and *Saul*, were ſeparated to particular occaſional ſervice, this way. *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. It is objected that "as the uſe of this rite in the primitive "times, was accompanied with *extraordinary gifts* of "the ſpirit, thoſe gifts being now ceaſed, the rite "ought to ceaſe alſo, as being a meer empty unmeaning ceremony." But it ſhould be obſerved, that this rite was often uſed, where *no extraordinary gifts* in conſequence are mentioned.—As in all the places before quoted, except perhaps in the caſe of *Joſhua*, and even of him it is ſaid *in him was the ſpirit*, before *Moſes* laid his hands on him. And of the *deacons* it is ſaid, before their ordination, they were *men full of the Holy Ghoſt*; nor do we find any *new gifts* imparted to them by laying on of hands: the like may be obſerved of *Barnabas* and *Saul*. *Acts*. xiii. 3. So that it appears plain to me, that the chief deſign of this practice was, to ſignify a ſolemn ſeparation to ſome particular office, or work, and as ſuch, properly continued in the church, even to

VII. The officers of a church have their re-

this day, as, if not *essential* to the *validity*, yet to the *clearness*, *solemnity and regularity* of an ordination.

4. It may possibly be objected, "that what I have "alledg'd, and taken for proof against *meer popular* or- "dinations, will carry me into another extream, and "prove the *sole* right of *diocesan prelates* to that work; "seeing the *ordainers here* refer'd to, were not *presby-* "*ters* but *apostles*, or *evangelists*, or (as *Acts* xiii. 3.) "*prophets*, who were of a *superior order*."

To which I wou'd answer, (1st) That it was absolutely necessary that such *extraordinary* or *superior officers*, as *apostles*, &c. should be the ordainers, until there were others appointed in the church; or else there could have been no ordinations at all (unless by the people, which I have proved was not the case) and therefore, nothing can be fairly inferred from that circumstance, in favour of the objection.

2. That the sacred history closed, before we could well have much account of ordinations, by the *ordinary or inferior officers*.—Yet we have one instance to that purpose; 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. Where *presbyters* are expressly mentioned, as concerned in the appointment of *Timothy*, to some extraordinary service.

3. That we do not find the apostles, or evangelists, ordained any *higher* order of officers to succeed them in the church as officers, than the *presbyters*, *pastors*, or *bishops* of *single* congregations; and consequently such *presbyters*, *pastors* or *bishops*, must succeed them in the power of ordination, if it is not in the people; *i. e.* If the power of ordination, was annexed to any *office* in the church, it must be to *such officers*, as the *elders* or *bishops* of *single* congregations, because it does not appear, there was any *higher* order or office appointed by the apostles. So that the *sole* power claim'd by a *Diocesan prelate* in this case, as a *superior* officer in the church, does not follow, as the objection supposes, from the *meer scriptural* account of the matter as I can perceive.

reſpective work, and duty, which they are to attend with ſerious care, diligence, and fidelity.

1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man ſpeak, let him ſpeak as the oracles of God. If any man miniſter, let him do it as of the ability God giveth.* Rom. xii. 6, 8. *Having gifts differing according to the grace given us; whether propheſying* [i. e. *teaching by infallible inſpiration*] * *let us propheſy,—or miniſtry*

E 2

* To *prophecy*, with us commonly ſignifies to *foretell* things to come; and ſo ſometimes in the ſcripture; but *there* it generally denotes a ſpeaking by immediate *infallible inſpiration*; or a declaration of the mind of God, under the *extraordinary* teachings or influence of his ſpirit. 2 *Pet.* i. 19, 21. 2 *Tim.* iii. 16. This gift, tho' long withheld from the church, before the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh, was afterwards reſtored, as highly neceſſary for the confirmation and furtherance of the goſpel; as appears from *Acts* xiv. 3. chap. xix. 6. 1 *Cor.* xiii. 2. It may ſometimes denote *ſinging* the praiſes of God, as Dr. *Lightfoot* and others juſtly obſerve from 1 *Sam.* x. 5--10. 1 *Cor.* xi. 5. chap. xiv. 5, 15. Yet perhaps the *ſinging* in this caſe, is to be underſtood, *only* of that which was *extraordinary*, or of ſuch divine ſongs, *&c.* as were then dictated by the *immediate infallible inſpiration of the ſpirit*, and not of *ordinary ſinging* ſuch pſalms or hymns as were *before* compoſed. —To *propheſy*, alſo ſometimes denotes the *preaching* or publiſhing the word of God, by way of exhortation and doctrine. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26, 29, 31. *Acts.* xv. 32. —But then not *ordinary* but *extraordinary* preaching is intended; or *preaching* by *immediate and infallible inſpiration*, and not by *ſtudy*. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 30, 31. chap. xiii.

miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtry.---He that teacheth on teaching, or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that ruleth with diligence.

More particularly,

1ſt. Of the Duty of biſhops, elders or paſtors.

(I.) They are to give themſelves to the ſtudy and preaching of the word, adminiſtration of the ſacraments, and prayers for and with the people.

1ſt. To the ſtudy and preaching of the word *,

2 Tim.

xiii. 2. *Acts* xiii. 1. See alſo the diſtinction made, 1 *Cor.* xii. 28. *Lord Barrington, in his miſcell. ſacr.* vol. i. Thinks *the interpretation of tongues, the diſcernment of ſpirits*, and *praying by the ſpirit*, as 'tis called *Jude* 19, 20.—1 *Cor.* xiv. 14, 15. included in *propheſying*. Upon the whole, ſo far as I can find, whether *propheſying*, means *praying, ſinging, teaching* or *exhorting*, or the like, it always carries in it the idea of *immediate infallible inſpiration*, or ſome *extraordinary* influence of the ſpirit, as well as when it denotes the *predicting* future events; and therefore diſtinguiſhes thoſe acts from what is common and ordinary in them.

* As *preaching* is, properly, publiſhing, or proclaiming, it includes in it, I apprehend, not only *fermonizing*, and *expounding*, but even *reading the ſcriptures* to the people.—For that it is a part of the miniſterial office to read the ſcriptures to the people, may be concluded from *Deut.* xxxi. 9, 12. *Nehem.* viii. 1, 2, 5. *Luke* iv. 16. (*Iſa.* lxvi. 21. *Mat.* xxiii. 34.) *Acts* xiii. 15, 27. *Col.* iv. 16. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 37. 1 *Theſ.* xv. 27.

2 *Theſ.*

2 Tim. ii. 4. *No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.* 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them.* 2 Tim. iv. 2. *Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season,—reprove,—rebuke—exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.* 2 Tim. ii. 15. *Study to shew thy self a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* 1 Tim. v. 17. *The elders that labour in the word and doctrines.* Acts vi. 4. *And we will give our selves continually to---the ministry of the word.*---Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go teach all nations.*—Mark xvi. 15.---1 Tim. iii. 2.---*A bishop must be apt to teach.*

2. Administration of sacraments,

Mat. xxviii. 19.---*Baptizing them in the name of the Father,* &c.

1 Cor. x. 16.---*The cup* we *bless,*---*the bread* we *break.*---1 Cor. iv. 1.--*Us, stewards of the mysteries of God.*

2 *Thes.* iii. 14. *Catechizing* may also be included in teaching (*Heb.* v. 12.) as being one way of teaching the principles of the christian religion, and perhaps most effectual for securing and promoting regular knowledge, and a solid judgment in divine things; tho' now too much neglected.

3. Prayers for, and with the people publickly.

Acts vi. 4. *And we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.* Acts xx. 36.---*He kneeled down and prayed with them all.* Col. i. 9. *We don't cease to pray for you.*

(II.) They are to preside, watch over, rule and * feed, the flock of Christ, with spiritual food.

1 Thes. v. 12. *Them that are* over *you in the Lord.* 1 Tim. v. 17. *The elders that* rule *well.* Heb. xiii. 17. *Them that have the* rule over *you, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account.*---Acts xx. 28. *Take heed to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you* Overseers, *to feed the flock of*

* 1. Tho' the principal part of this *feeding* of the flock, is doubtless included in preaching,—yet private instructions, and exhortations are included also.

2. To *preside* is to sit as chief, guide, director and moderator in the affairs of the church.

3. As to *ruling*, it consists, I apprehend, not in a power of *making new* laws, but in an orderly and right execution of those already made by Christ himself, the sole law-giver in his church; and thus the obedience paid to pastors, is not a blind, implicite, absolute submission to their dictates; but a rational, reverent, conscientious regard to the laws of Christ, by them duly explained, inculcated, and addressed to the heart. See chap. iii. prop. i. note 4. and prop. viii. chap. iv. prop. iii. note there.

of God.---1. Pet. v. 2. *Feed the flock.*---Jer. iii. 15.---*Feed you with knowledge and underſtanding.*----*See alſo* Ezek. xxxiv. 4.

(III.) They are to ſet a holy example to the people, in all things.

Tit. ii. 7. *In all things ſhew thyſelf a pattern of good works.* 1 Tim. iv. 12. *Be thou an example of the believers in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in purity.* 1 Pet. v. 3. *Being examples to the flock.*

(IV.) They are to bleſs the people in the name of the *Lord.*

1 Cor. xiv. 16. *Elſe when thou ſhalt bleſs with the ſpirit, how ſhall he which occupieth the room of the unlearned ſay amen?* Numb. vi. 6, 23. *Ye prieſts ſhall bleſs the children of Iſrael.*--ver. 27. *Shall put my name upon (them) and I will bleſs them.* Deut. x. 8.---*The Lord ſeparated the tribe of Levi to bleſs in his name.*---2 Cor. xiii. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghoſt, be with you all. Amen.*

(V.) They are to viſit, and pray with the ſick in private, when deſired; upon which a divine bleſſing is promiſed.

James v. 14. *Is any ſick? let him ſend for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.*---ver. 15. *And the prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick* *.

(VI.) They are to aſſiſt the churches in the ordination of their officers, and adminiſtration of all divine ordinances, when occaſionally or properly called thereunto.

Acts xiv. 23. *And when* they (*Paul and Barnabas*) *had ordained* (*with the people's ſuffrage*) *elders in every church.*---Acts vi. 3. *Men whom* we (*apoſtles*) *may appoint.* Tit. i. 5. *For this cauſe left I thee* (*Titus*) *in Crete, that thou ſhould'ſt ordain*

* If by *faith* here, we underſtand the common faith of chriſtians, we muſt not ſuppoſe the ſick perſon ſhould be always reſtored and preſerved from death, by the prayers of the elders, for that would have been contrary to the divine appointment, and matter of fact; —but the meaning is, that in this way of humble and fervent prayer, with a believing hope and truſt in the mercy of God, a ſuitable bleſſing might be expected, and the affliction either removed or ſanctified; as beſt anſwered the ends of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, as concern'd in the government of the world in general, and the propagation of the goſpel in particular.—Though I rather think by *faith* here, we muſt underſtand the faith of miracles; *i. e.* a *particular*, and *extraordinary perſwaſion* of, and truſt in, the miraculous power of God. A faith peculiar to thoſe times, and produced by ſome ſpecial extraordinary impulſe of the divine ſpirit.—See *Mat.* xvii. 20. chap. xxi. 21. *Mark* xi. 22. *Acts* iii. 16. 1 *Cor.* xiii. 2.

ordain elders in every city.---*See* chap. iii. prop. vi. ſect. iv. *and* note *there.*

2dly, Of the duty of Deacons.

(I.) It appertains to the deacons to take the care and management of the *ſecular* * affairs of the church, that the biſhop or paſtor may be more at leiſure to attend the ſpiritual.

Acts vi. 2, 3, 4. *Then the twelve ſaid---it is not reaſonable that we ſhould leave the word of God and* ſerve tables,---*Look ye out men whom we may appoint over* this *buſineſs*,---*but we will give ourſelves continually to prayer, and the miniſtry of the word.*

(II.) Thus of courſe it belongs to the deacons, to provide fit materials for the decent adminiſtration of baptiſm, and the ſupper of the Lord; that the apoſtles rule might be kept **.

1 Cor.

* The care of the poor originally and primarily, belonged to the elder or biſhop,—as appears from *Acts* xi. 30. *Acts* iv. 37. *Acts* vi. 2, 4.—1 *Cor.* xvi. 1. 3.

** It is generally allowed by enquirers into theſe ſubjects, that in the primitive church there were *deaconeſſes*; i. e. pious women, whoſe particular buſineſs it was to aſſiſt in the entertainment and care of the itinerant preachers; viſit the ſick and impriſon'd, inſtruct female catechumens, and aſſiſt at their baptiſm; then more particularly neceſſary from the peculiar cuſtoms of thoſe countries, the perſecuted ſtate of the church, and the

1 Cor. xiv. 40.---*Let all things be done decently and in order.*

(III.) They are to acquaint themſelves, as exactly as poſſible, with the neceſſities of the poor, and ſupply them according to the church's ability.

Acts iv. 35. *And diſtribution was made to every man, according as he had need.* xi. 29, 30. *Then the diſciples, every man according to his ability, determined to ſend relief unto the brethren in Judea; which alſo they did, and ſent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*--*Compare* Acts vi. 1. *&c.*

N. B. To the elders, *as principals, the deacons being their aſſiſtants in this caſe.*

(IV.) They

the ſpeedier ſpreading of the goſpel.—Such a one 'tis reaſonable to think *Phebe* was, mentioned *Rom.* xvi. 1. Who is expreſsly called (Διακονον) a *deaconeſs*, or *ſtated ſervant*, as *Dr. Doddridge* renders it.—They were uſually *widows*, and to prevent ſcandal, generally in years, 1 *Tim.* v. 9. See alſo *Spanhem. hiſt. Chriſt. Secul.* i. page 554.—The apoſtolick conſtitutions (as they are called) mention the ordination of a *deaconeſs*, and the form of prayer uſed on that occaſion; lib. viii. chap. 19, 20.—*Pliny* alſo in his celebrated epiſtle (xcvii) to *Trajan*, is thought to refer to them, when ſpeaking of two female chriſtians, whom he put to the torture, he ſays, *quæ miniſtræ dicebantur*; i. e. who were called deaconeſſes.—But as the primitive chriſtians ſeem to be led to this practice, from the *peculiarity* of their circumſtances; and as the ſcripture is intirely ſilent, as to any appointment to this ſuppoſed office, or any rules about it, it is I think very juſtly laid aſide, at leaſt as an office.

(IV.) They are to ſupply the biſhops, elders, or paſtors ſeaſonably, with what is allotted by the church for their ſupport *.

1 Cor. ix. 14 *Even ſo hath the Lord ordained that they that preach the goſpel ſhould live of the goſpel.* 2 Tim. 2. 4. *No man that warreth entangleth himſelf with the affairs of this life.*

VIII. Though the officers of a particular church are, as ſuch, the only *proper* regular executors of its power and authority, yet they cannot rightfully exerciſe their office therein, without the knowledge and conſent of the church; nor have they any compulſary power over the conſciences of any, or authority to decide in matters of faith, tho' united in a general council **.

Gal.

* 1. It follows, that the deacons are to receive the contributions of the church, in charge for the purpoſes above mentioned; and that they are accountable to the church for their management.

2. That it muſt pertain to their office to admoniſh, reprove, and bring to the cognizance of the church, ſuch as neglect their duty in contribution. And

3. That they ſhould viſit the poor, and acquaint themſelves with their neceſſities, as fully as poſſible.

** 1. The reaſon is—numbers cannot make *fallible* men *infallible* — nor can thoſe who are themſelves *fallible*, have authority to *decide* in matters of conſcience; of which the word of God is the only guide to both miniſters and people, ſince extraordinary inſpiration

Gal. i. 8. *But though we, or an angel from heaven, ſhould preach any other goſpel unto you than that we have preached—let him be accurſed.* 2 Cor. i. 24. *Not that we have dominion over your faith.* 1 Pet. v. 3. *Neither as being lords over God's heritage.* 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. *When* ye, *the church, are gathered together---to deliver ſuch a one to ſatan---* which 2 Cor. ii. 6. *Is* called therefore, *the reproof of* many. Acts xv. 22. *Then it pleaſed the apoſtles and elders with the whole church.* 3 John ix. *But Diotrephes who loveth to have the preheminence receiveth us not.*

IX. Every

ration has ceaſed. And for this Reaſon, on the other hand, no particular church (or body of men) has a power over the conſcience of its miniſter.

2. Though the miniſter of a *particular church* is under ſome peculiar obligations to inſtruct and guide them; yet, as he is a miniſter of the church in general, (ſo far as is conſiſtent with his duty to that *particular church)* he may occaſionally preach and adminiſter the ſacraments, and aſſiſt at ordinations elſewhere.—And may even remove to any other congregation, when he believes in his conſcience he has a call of providence ſo to do, though not upon every trifling occaſion;— and that without re-ordination, of which there are no inſtances in ſcripture as I can find, and for which there is no countenance from reaſon:— Tho' upon ſuch new ſettlement, the ſetting apart ſome time

IX. Every particular church hath a right within itſelf, of judging of the fitneſs and *qualifications* * of its members; i. e. of accepting or refuſing ſuch as offer themſelves to its communion; and of continuing or ſeparating from it, thoſe that are already in it, provided they exerciſe that right only in a way agreeable to the expreſs laws of Chriſt, and conſiſtent with their own peace and edification; and that charity they ought to cultivate with all the people of God.

Acts ix. 26. *When Saul eſſayed to join himſelf to the diſciples, they were afraid of*

time for ſolemn prayer, and imploring the divine bleſſing, is doubtleſs very expedient.

3. As every miniſter of Chriſt, properly receives his office from Chriſt himſelf, at leaſt as to the eſſentials of it; ſo he cannot be, *ipſo facto*, deprived of it by meer human authority: though by being guilty of ſuch errors in doctrine, or immoralities in practice, as are inconſiſtent with it, he may forfeit it, and indeed really diveſt himſelf of it; and in that caſe may, and ought to be prohibited the exerciſe of it, by every chriſtian ſociety where he may attempt it (they knowing his caſe) and for that purpoſe they have a right and power in themſelves, as the guardians of the honour of Chriſt, and the purity of the faith and morality of his church.

* 1 Theſe qualifications (which follow) are neceſſary to the chriſtian character in general, and deſcriptive of it, but more particularly applicable to church-members, as what they ought to be in ſome good meaſure

of him, and believed not that he was a diſciple.

I. As to the qualifications of thoſe that are to be received into communion.

1. They ſhould appear to have ſome competent knowledge of the chief and diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the chriſtian religion.

Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go teach all nations.* John vi. 45. *They ſhall all be* taught *of God.* Heb. viii. 11. *All* know *me from the leaſt to the greateſt.* 1 Cor. iv. 3. *If*

ſure, even before they take upon them that character in ſo public a manner.

2. As it is one principal end and deſign of the inſtitution of goſpel-churches, to ſecure and promote the purity and morality of the chriſtian religion, great care ought to be taken by them, to keep up a due diſcipline in admitting perſons to communion with them, and continuing them in it; leſt *holy things be given to dogs*; immoralities countenanced; and no difference made between the godly and the wicked: yet on the other hand, great tenderneſs is to be uſed towards the weak in faith, who appear upon the whole to be ſincere believers in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and deſirous of living in obedience to his commands; that they may not be diſcouraged, or deprived of the means of their ſpiritual edification and comfort. The extream *niceneſs and ſeverity* therefore of ſome churches in this matter, is rather to be *deplored* than *imitated*; who, to ſupport the affectation of extraordinary holineſs, or the credit of their own inventions and peculiarities, too often make a voluntary *unſcrupled* ſacrifice of chriſtian charity, the rights and privileges of their chriſtian brethren, and the honour of religion itſelf. *See concluſ.*

If our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt. John xvii. 3. *That they might* know *thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.*

2. They ſhould be acquainted, with the chief deſign of the rites and poſitive inſtitutions of chriſtianity, and reverently uſe them, viz. *Baptiſm*, and the *Lord's Supper.*

Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go teach all nations,* baptizing *them.* Heb. x. 22. *Having our bodies waſhed with pure water.* Rom. vi. 4. *We are buried with him by baptiſm* into his death, *that as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead, even ſo we alſo ſhould* walk *in newneſs of life.* Acts ii. 38. *Be* baptized *for the remiſſion of your ſins.* ver. 41. Then *they that gladly received the word were* baptized --- *and added* to the church. 1 Pet. iii. 21. *Baptiſm doth now ſave us (not the putting away the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience) by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead.* Acts viii. 12. *And when they believed---they were baptized.* Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* 1 Cor. xi. 23, 29. *I received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you---as oft as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death until he come. Wherefore whoſo-*

whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.*

3. They should appear to repent of, and forsake their sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, according to his gospel.

Mark i. 15. *Repent ye and believe the gospel.* Mat. iii. 6. *And were baptized in Jordan confessing their sins.* John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Acts xvii. 30. *But now commandeth all men every where to repent.* Acts v. 14. *And believers were added to the Lord.* Acts i. 47. *To the church.*

4. They should manifest a sincere and fervent love to the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Lord God and Redeemer, and worship him accordingly.

John xx. 28. *And Thomas said unto him,* My Lord and my God! John v. 23. *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.* 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto*

* i. e. He that partakes of the Lord's Supper as a common meal, and not with a religious reverence, and particular regard to the death of Christ, is so guilty.

7. *Unto you that believe, he is precious.* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.* Rev. i. 5, 6. *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood---be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

5. They should make some express *declaration* or confession of their faith and repentance, their hope in the promises, and subjection to the authority of Christ, and the order and discipline of his church, according to his word *.

* It may be ask'd perhaps, to whom is this declaration of faith, repentance, &c. to be made, in order to give satisfaction to the church? I answer; as there is no particular direction given in this case by *Christ* in his word, it must be left to the judgment of every particular church to chuse their own way, so it be not inconsistent with any known rule of duty.—But, as to the candidates giving an account of their experiences in these matters, in a *minute* and *circumstantial* manner, before the *whole body*, which is the method in some churches, as it has no foundation in scripture (as I can find) is putting them upon an unnecessary piece of mortification,—hurts the modesty of the more diffident and humble — gratifies the spiritual vanity and pride of such as value themselves upon their religious knowledge and attainments, — and is the occasion of preventing many worthy persons from the church-communion.—It seems to me not ALWAYS so eligible as their doing it to the pastor, and two or three others of the most solid and judicious amongst them, who may make a report thereof to the church; liberty being

1. That they ſhould make a declaration of faith, &c.

Mat. x. 32. *Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs before my Father.* Rom. x. 10. *And with the mouth confeſſion is made to ſalvation.* 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be always ready to give an anſwer to every man, that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you.* Acts xix. 18. *And many of them that believed, came and confeſſed, and ſhewed their deeds.* Acts viii. 38. *I believe* that Jeſus is the Son of God. Rom. x. 9. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with the mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe in thy heart, that God raiſed him from the dead*--- 1 John iv. 3. *Every*

ing alſo given, for any particular perſons, to ſatisfy themſelves, if they deſire it, by private conference. [And I ſay NOT ALWAYS, becauſe in *ſome caſes* ſuch a particular declaration of faith, and the gracious work of God, may be inſtructive and edifying to others and anſwer many valuable ends.] But the making ſuch a public declaration, a *term* of communion, which it is very evident, the great Lawgiver has not made ſo, is carrying the matter beyond all reaſonable and warrantable bounds, and not at all conſiſtent with the liberty of the goſpel. As to a more general profeſſion of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as the only Saviour, a renunciation of the world, and devotion to the ſervice of God; I ſee not but this may be made before all, not only the church but others, upon any proper occaſion, and particularly upon ſuch a one as taking up a public profeſſion of religion. See the ſcriptures quoted under the propoſition.

Every ſpirit that confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, *is not of God.* 1 John iv. 15. *Whoſoever ſhall confeſs that Jeſus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him.* John i. 49. *Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the king of Iſrael.* John vi. 68, 69. *Lord to whom ſhould we go?---We believe and are ſure, thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* 1 John v. 20. *This is the true God and eternal life.* Col. i. 14. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins.*

2. Their hope in the promiſes.

Heb. xi. 14. *Theſe were perſwaded of the promiſes and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth, declaring plainly, they ſeek a better country.* Col. i. 27. *Chriſt in you the hope of glory.* Ver. 5. *The hope laid up for you in heaven.* Epheſ. ii. 12. *Ye were——without hope.* 1 Pet. i. 3. *Begotten again to a lively hope.*

3. Of their ſubjection to the authority of Chriſt, and the order of his church *.

* This ſubjection muſt be conſiſtent with the right of private judgment, in matters of conſcience, and with all the natural and civil obligations of life; and can only relate to the rules and orders Chriſt has expreſsly given.

2 Cor. ix. 13. *Your profeſſed ſubjection to the goſpel of Chriſt.* 1 Cor. xiv. 40. *Let all things be done decently, and in order.* 2 Theſ. iii. 6. *Withdraw from every brother that walketh diſorderly.* 1 Cor. x. 32. *Give no offence to the church of God.*

4. The ſincerity of their profeſſion ſhould be evidenced by good works.

James ii. 18. *I will ſhew thee my faith by my works.* 1 John iii. 3. *He that hath this hope in himſelf, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* Tit. i. 16. *They profeſs to know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and diſobedient, and to every good work reprobate.*

Particularly,

1ſt, They ſhould appear to be free from all groſs and ſcandalous ſins.

Gal. ii. 24. *They that are Chriſt's, have crucified the fleſh with its affections and luſts*---ſuch as 1 Cor. v. 11. chap. vi. 9. *Fornication, covetouſneſs, idolatry, railing, drunkenneſs, extortion, adultery, Theft.* Gal. v. 19, 20. *Laſciviouſneſs, witchcraft,* [or malicious combinations with inviſible wicked ſpirits] * *hatred, ſedition,*

* *Witchcraft, or malicious combinations, &c*] Whatever there might, or might not be in ſuch combinations, it is well known many of the heathens were the

ſedition, hereſy [or factiouſly dividing the church] *envy, murder, and ſuch like.*

2. They ſhould be ready to deny themſelves, and ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake, when called thereunto.

Mat. xvi. 22. *If any man will come after me let him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs and follow me.* 1 Pet. iv. 13. *But rejoice, inaſmuch as ye are made partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings.* 2 Titus iii. 12. *All that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* Rev. ii. 10. *Fear none of thoſe things, which thou ſhalt ſuffer --- Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

3. They ſhould be juſt and faithful to all men.

Mark x. 19. *Defraud not.* 1 Cor. vi. 8, 9. *Ye do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God?*

then (and are to this day) very much addicted to what *they* at leaſt *imagine* to be ſuch. But as the word (φαρμακεια) ſignifies alſo *poiſons*, it may ſignify here, that more private and malicious ſort of murder, perpetrated by means of ſome poiſonous compoſition, adminiſter'd for that purpoſe. See Dr. *Doddridge* and Dr. *Whitby* on the place.

4. They ſhould be diſpoſed to cultivate the ſpirit of univerſal benevolence, and evidence it in their whole conduct.

1 Cor. xiii. 2. *And have no charity I am nothing.* Mat. v. 44. *Love your enemies --- do good to them that hate you,* Gal. vi. 10. *Let us do good unto all men, eſpecially to the houſehold of faith.* 1 John iii. 16. *And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* [i. e. ſhould providence call us to it.]

5. They ſhould love and practiſe the duties of piety and devotion, in their ſecret retirements, families, (if any) and the church of God, conſtantly.

2 Theſ. v. 17. *Pray without ceaſing.* Mat. vi. 6. *When thou prayeſt enter into thy cloſet---ſhut thy door and pray to thy Father.* Tit. ii. 12. *The grace of God teaches us, that denying ungodlineſs, and wordly luſts, we ſhould live godly in this preſent world.* Joſh. xxiv. 15. *As for me and my houſe we will ſerve the Lord.* Jer. x. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not upon thy name.* Pſal. xxvi. 8. *Lord I have loved the habitation of thy houſe, the place where thy honour dwelleth.* Pſal. xxvii. 4. *That I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord, all the days of my life.* Heb. x. 25. *Not forſaking*

forſaking the aſſembling your ſelves together.

6. They ſhould have a due government of their tongues.

Epheſ. iv. 31. *Let all clamour and evil ſpeaking be put away from you.* Jam. i. 26. *If any bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain.*

7. They ſhould live above all undue influence from this preſent world, and have their hearts and affections prevailingly fixed upon a better.

1 John v. 4. *Whatſoever is born of God overcometh the world.* 1 John ii. 15. *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Col. iii. 2. *Set your affections on things above.* Phil. iii. 20. *Our converſation is in heaven.* Heb. xi. 13, 16. *Strangers and pilgrims on earth---they deſire a better country,* &c.

8. They ſhould be ſober, and temperate in all things.

1 Cor. ix. 25. *Temperate in all things.* 1 Pet. i. 13. *Be ſober.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 4. *That every one know how to poſſeſs his veſſel, in ſanctification and honour.*

(II.) As to the ſeparation, or excommunication of thoſe that are already members. Obſerve,

1ſt. The occaſion.

1. Factiouſly oppoſing, or abſolutely denying any * eſſential article of the chriſtian faith, obſtinately perſiſting in the ſame.

Tit. 3. 10. *A man that is an heretick,* (αιρετικον ** *a wicked ſectarian*) *after the firſt and ſecond admonition reject.* 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. *Of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, ſaying, the reſurrection is*

* 1. What theſe *eſſential* articles are, every particular church (as well as perſon) will, I ſuppoſe, claim a right of judging for themſelves. — But ſurely, they ſhould be very tender and cautious, leſt they rank any other doctrines under that title, than what are *clearly*, and *plainly aſſerted* as ſuch in the *word of God*; and the belief of which is THERE *made neceſſary* to the true love of God, ſincere worſhip of him, obedience to his will, and the hope of eternal life, as the free gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt. (See note 2. chap. 1. prop. 3.) and particularly conſult Mat. v. 6, 7. chap. ——John xvii. 3. John xiv. 10, 23. Rom. x. 8, 9. John iii. 3. 14, 36. 1 John iv. 1, 3, 10, 14, 15.

** The word (αιρεσις) which we tranſlate *hereſy*, properly ſignifies *opinion*, *ſect*, *diviſion*, &c. and is ſometimes uſed in the new teſtament in a *good* (or at leaſt in an innocent) ſenſe; and ſometimes in a *bad* one. In a *good* ſenſe, Acts xxvi. 5. In a *bad*, Act. v. 17. 2 Pet. ii. 1. And here (Tit. iii. 10.) αιρετικον, muſt mean, I conceive, one who *wilfully and obſtinately oppoſes the eſſential articles of the chriſtian faith; and that contrary to the convictions of his own mind, and with the wicked intention of dividing the chriſtian church, to make a party for himſelf.* For that the ideas of *immo-*

rality,

is paſt already, and overthrown the faith of ſome --- whom I delivered to Satan. 1 Tim. i. 20. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4, 5. *If any man teacheth otherwiſe, and conſent not to the words of Chriſt, and ſound doctrine, according to godlineſs, doting about queſtions (from whence cometh perverſe diſputings) from ſuch withdraw thyſelf* *.

2. Any

rality, and *ſelf-condemnation*, are implied in the hereſy here mentioned, is, I think, very evident from ver. 11. where 'tis ſaid, that ſuch a one is *ſubverted, ſinneth, and is ſelf-condemn'd.*—As well as that of oppoſing the *eſſential* articles of the chriſtian faith; which was the caſe of thoſe mentioned, Titus ii. 17, 18. And therefore the word *heretic*, cannot without breach of charity be apply'd to any *ſincere humble enquirer* after *truth*, who *peaceably and conſcientiouſly* differs from other chriſtians, in points not declared in ſcripture to be neceſſary to ſalvation.

* If this *withdrawing* be underſtood as reſpecting the Lord's table, it can mean no more than an *orderly* procedure towards the juſt ſuſpenſion of offenders, and not withdrawing ourſelves from our place and duty there, upon the apprehenſion of their unworthineſs; for this would be to neglect one duty for the ſake of another; to excommunicate our ſelves, inſtead of them; and to pluck up the wheat with the tares.—It is therefore a miſtaken zeal for the purity of religion, that leads ſome people, upon the knowledge of the miſbehaviour of their fellow members, immediately to ſuſpend themſelves from the ſupper. — Their duty is to keep on ſtill doing that in remembrance of Chriſt, which he has commanded; and in the mean time to take

2. Any ſcandalous vices or immoralities perſiſted in without repentance.

Rev. ii. 2. *I know thy works, and how thou canſt not bear with them that are evil.* Heb. xii. 15, 16. *Leſt there be any profane perſon.*— 1 Cor. v. 11, 13. *Not to keep company* (i. e. *intimately*) *if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with ſuch a one no not to eat,* [*perhaps at a* common, *much leſs at the* Lord's *table*] *—put away from yourſelves that wicked perſon* [*mentioned verſe 1ſt.*] *

3. Diſ-

take all juſt, reaſonable, and orderly methods, to bring the offenders to repentance, or the church to her duty in the adminiſtration of diſcipline; and if this cannot be done, to bear and wait 'till it can; as I think is very evident from the parable of the tares—— from the ſtate of the corinthian church, and the advice the apoſtle gives them.—And from this conſideration, that the unworthineſs of others, cannot hurt me, any further than I criminally countenance it.

* 1ſt. In the whole buſineſs of excommunication the church ſhould act with great caution and ſeriouſneſs; humble regard to the honour of Chriſt, the ends of church fellowſhip, and tender concern for the offender's good; ſtrictly guarding againſt wrath, malice, party ſpirit, perſonal reſentment, and the like; or elſe they muſt not expect the preſence and bleſſing of Chriſt in what they do, who in the midſt of *juſtice remembers mercy*.

2d. That it is the offender's *own ſin*, and not the ſentence of any particular church, or eccleſiaſtical power whatever,

3. Disturbing the peace of the church, in any remarkable or dangerous degree, by obstinate and violent contentions *.

Gal. v. 12. *I wou'd they were cut off that trouble you.* Rom. xvi. 17. *Mark them which cause divisions---and avoid them.*---2 Thes. iii. 6. *We command* you brethren *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that* ye *withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the traditions he receiv'd of us. See also* 1 Tim. vi. 3. 45.

4. Suffering near relatives to want the necessary supports and comforts of life, when able to relieve them.

1 Tim.

whatever, that separates him from the body of the faithful, or the *real catholic church.* The sentence of a particular church can only affect his particular relation to them; and therefore one particular society may very lawfully and *consistently* receive those, whom another *uncharitably or rashly reject.*

3dly. When any person appears to be rejected, in an orderly, serious, and solemn manner, for *real immoralities*, his character will appear so much the more notoriously bad to all good men, and be treated accordingly; which is itself no small punishment.

* Churches should be very careful, how they make the little bickerings, and contentions of their members, occasions of church censures, and suspensions from the table;—but rather, with proper admonitions of the reconciling and peaceable kind, leave the matter with the *consciences* of the contenders.—For want of this caution, the *meer* sins of infirmity have sometimes been treated with the most solemn severities due only to gross immoralities.

1 Tim. v. 8.---*If any provide not for his own houſe he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel.*

2. The manner of proceeding in excluding members.

1. The crime being known; admonitions, exhortations, reproofs and prayers, and ſuch like gentle means are to be firſt uſed, * for the reſtoration of the offender; at firſt more privately, and then more publickly as the caſe requires.

Gal. vi. 7. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are ſpiritual reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs.*--Mat. xviii. 16, 17. *If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, tell him his fault between thee and him alone, but if he will not hear thee take one or two more,---and if he will not hear them, tell it to the church* *.

1 Tim. v. 20. *Them that ſin rebuke before all.* 2 Tim. ii. 25. *In meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves---if God ſhall give them repentance.*---1 Theſ. v. 14.---*Warn them that are unruly.*

2 But

* But perhaps in ſome caſes, where the crime is highly ſcandalous, it may be more neceſſary for the honour of religion, the good of the offender, and awakening the caution of the too careleſs, to proceed *immediately* to excommunication, as ſoon as the fact is clearly proved. Compare 1 *Cor.* v. 13. with 2 *Cor.* vii. 11.

** See chap. iii. prop. i. and note there.

2. But if such offender appear to be obstinate, and persist in his sin after due endeavours for his repentance, the church should proceed to separate him from her communion.

> Mat. xviii. 17. *But if he will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man* *. Tit. iii. 10. *After the first and second admonition reject — This is done.*

1. By withdrawing from him (i. e.) refusing that intimate correspondence with him as at other times (unless to admonish him of his duty) and perhaps suspending him from the Lord's table, till his repentance, or obstinacy, more fully appear **.

> 2 Thes. iii. 14, 15. *If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed;—yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

2. But in case of scandalous sins, or those less scandalous, yet intirely inconsistent with the

* See bishop *Burnett* on the articles. Art. xxi. page 205. See also chap. iii. prop. i. and note there.

** This suspension from the table, is by some called the *lesser excommunication*; a measure that has no *express* warrant, that I know of, from the word of God; but may perhaps implicitly come under the general rule, *of doing all things decently and in order*, and the text here cited for keeping *no company with him*; as communicating with him at the Lord's table, is keeping company with him in the highest sense.

the main design, and chief ends of church-fellowship obstinately persisted in; the offender, being clearly convicted thereof, shou'd be separated, and excluded intirely from all the special privileges of that church, and all special relation thereunto; *judicially*, by the vote of the church. *---*Declaratively and executively*** by the bishop, elder, or president thereof,---whose proper business it is, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to declare—*such person* (proved guilty of *such and such* crimes) now no longer a member of that church, but by the laws and institution of Christ in that case provided, excommunicated, or separated from all *special*

* 1st. That it is an act of the church, is evident from what the apostle says, 1 *Cor.* iii. 4, 5. *Ye are gathered to deliver such a one to Satan.*

** 2d. The *power of the keys*, as 'tis often called, or of binding or loosing, with respect to the *external privileges* and communion of the church, seems to be no more than an *executive* power, in the hands of the *pastors, bishops or elders*; what is properly *decretive, or judicatorial*, pertaining to the whole body of the church, including both pastor and people (see chap iii. prop. ii. note 4.) And even that power with them, must be limited intirely, by the *express* laws of Christ; for as to the *remitting* and retaining sins, respecting the conscience, neither the ministerial office, nor the church, appears to me from scripture, to have any peculiar power therein annexed to it, more than that of declaring in the name of Christ, that all true penitents are graciously pardoned; and that all impenitents are under guilt and condemnation.

cial relation to the ſame, and diveſted of all intereſt in the *ſpecial* privileges thereof, as a part of the viſible kingdom of Chriſt; and conſequently thenceforth to be accounted, and treated by them, as one of the world, the kingdom of ſatan, until he repent.

3. Which declaration, ſhould be accompany'd with ſolemn prayer for a divine bleſſing thereupon, as an ordinance of Chriſt, appointed for the vindication of his honour, the diſcountenance of ſin, and the advancement of holineſs amongſt his people *.

1 Cor. v. 4, 5. *In the name of the Lord Jeſus, when ye are gathered together to deliver ſuch a one to ſatan, for the deſtruction of the fleſh.* 1 Tim. i. 20. Mat. xviii.

* 1ſt. Thus excommunication appears to be a meer ſpiritual ordinance of Chriſt, deſigned for maintaining the purity of his church, and the glory of his holineſs in the government of it, and cannot extend to the temporal eſtate, or the natural and civil rights of the offender; nor ſet aſide any of the civil, natural, or moral duties of life, owing to him from the members of the church or others.—See Dr. *Doddridge's fam. expoſ.* vol. v. page 422 and 581. to which I have been able to refer the reader, but ſince theſe papers were prepared for the preſs.

2. The prayer accompanying excommunication, whether before or after the ſentence, or rather both; will doubtleſs conſiſt in confeſſion of ſins, bewailing the ſtate of the delinquent, and petitions for his recovery, and that the ſolemn procedure upon it may have a proper effect upon others.

xviii. 17. *Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* 2 Theſ. iii. *We command* you *brethren in the name of the Lord Jeſus, to withdraw yourſelves*, &c. Phil. iv. 6. *In every thing by prayer and ſupplication—let your requeſt be made known to God.* 1 Tim. iv. 5. *For it is ſanctified by the word of God and prayer.*

3. But in caſe any ſuch offender manifeſt true repentance, he is to be encouraged therein, and received again, at his requeſt, into their communion.

2 Cor. ii. 7. *Ye ought to forgive and comfort him, leſt he be ſwallowed up with over much ſorrow.* And verſe 11. *Leſt Satan get an advantage.*

X. When any matter happens to be debated in the church, the brethren have equal liberty to ſpeak their ſentiments, for or againſt the queſtion; though they ought to do it with ſerioufneſs, decency, and order; to which, as preſident, the paſtor or elder preſent, has power to oblige them, by the laws of Chriſt *.

Thus

* When any queſtion, duly conſidered, is put to the vote of the church for determination, the *minor* part, out of regard to the honour of Chriſt, and their common

Thus *Acts* xv. iv, 22. We find the apoſtles, elders, and brethren of the church, debating the matter concerning the neceſſity of obſerving the Moſaic rites, with great freedom and regularity, according to that rule, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26, 40. *Let all things be done to edifying—decently and in order.* Rom. xvi. 17. *Mark them that cauſe diviſions and offences—and avoid them.* Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves.*

mon edification, ought peaceably to ſubmit to the *major*, as far as they poſſibly can, without ſinning againſt their conſciences; according to the rule, 1 *Pet.* v. 5. *Be ye ſubject to one another.*

2. I take it for granted, that every doubtful queſtion in which the church is concerned, is to be determined (after due debate) by the votes of the majority, as the moſt natural and orderly way.

3. In ſome weighty caſes perhaps, not leſs than two thirds of the brethren, ſhould be deemed a ſufficient majority. But in all caſes, both ſides ſhould be cautious of puſhing things to extremities.—It is better to give up our opinion where conſcience is not concerned, and after a modeſt defence, than to break the peace of the church.—But where a minority cannot, after due conſideration, in conſcience ſubmit, they ought peaceably to remove.—The majority having no authority over the conſciences of a minority.

4thly. It is a groſs abuſe of this privilege, when the more ignorant, who think more highly of themſelves than they ought, obſtinately inſiſt upon their opinion againſt the ſenſe of the more knowing and judicious, as

is

(XI.) Women have no right to rule, teach, adviſe, diſpute, (or vote) in the church*.

1 Cor.

is too often the caſe.—In matters of conſcience, thoſe of the meaneſt abilities have a right to uſe all *lawful* means of ſupporting, and enjoying their liberty; but in other caſes they ſhould be willing to hearken to the advice, and comply with the judgment of thoſe that have better capacities, and opportunities for knowing what is moſt expedient;—and they ſhould take particular care that pride, and the luſt of power, does not actuate them under the pretence of conſcience, *Epheſ.* v. 21. *Submit your ſelves to one another in the fear of God.* Phil. ii. 3. *Let nothing be done thro' ſtrife, or vain glory.*—Rom. xii. 16.—*Be not wiſe in your own conceits.*

*1ſt. A woman may be allowed to ſpeak in the church as a witneſs or evidence, to any matter of fact under debate, and to ſatisfy them, as to her qualifications for church-fellowſhip; tho' with reſpect to the latter, it would (I ſhould think) be more decent for her to ſpeak only to a few deputed to hear her.

2d. As to the acts of worſhip, it may be objected perhaps that the apoſtle evidently ſuppoſes it as an allowed caſe, that *women* might *pray and prophecy*, i. e. ſpeak in public, by his giving rules about their conduct therein. 1 *Cor.* xi. 5, &c.—To which it may be anſwer'd; that perhaps the apoſtle might intend only, their appearing to *join* with *others* in thoſe acts, and not their ſpeaking *themſelves* as *teachers or leaders* in the worſhip; or at moſt, that they might ſpeak themſelves *only* when under an *immediate inſpiration*, as they doubtleſs ſometimes were, as well as the men. *Acts* ii. 16, 18. chap. xxii. 9. So Dr. *Doddridge and* Dr. *Benſon ſolve the difficulty.*—Dr. *Lightfoot*, vol. ii. p. 1161, underſtands *propheſying*, of ſinging pſalms, in which as in prayers, women might join with their fellow-worſhipers as is uſual amongſt us.--But perhaps the caſe might be thus, *viz.*---The women in thoſe times by the cuſ-

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1 Cor. xiv. 34. *Let your women keep ſilence in the churches,—for they are commanded to be under obedience.*--1 Tim. ii. 8, 10, 11, 12. *I will that* men *pray every where,—but I ſuffer not a* woman *to teach,—nor to uſurp authority over the man, but to be in ſilence, and learn in ſilence with all ſubjection.*--Thus *Acts* vi. 3. The brethren are directed to chuſe the deacons. And in the famous church meeting, *Acts* xv. we find the whole church no other than the apoſtles, elders and brethren. ver. 22, 23.

tom of their country, the Greeks in particular (and ſuch were the Corinthians) lay under peculiar reſtraints as to their appearance in public company; and upon moſt public occaſions, uſed to have their ſeparate apartments to which the men were not admitted, except of the neareſt kindred; hence it is highly probable, the chriſtian women had their ſeparate aſſemblies, (ſometimes occaſionally at leaſt) for prayer and propheſying, and other acts of private worſhip, as the apoſtle intimates. 1 *Cor.* vii. 5. And when tho' the men were *not* preſent, it became them to be *veil'd*, becauſe of *the angels* who were inviſible witneſſes of their behaviour; or becauſe of *thoſe men* who might be appointed *meſſengers* for regulating their aſſembly, and their buſineſs in it.—Admiting this, then it is evident the apoſtle in the xi. chap. ſpeaks of the women's *praying and propheſying* in their *own* ſeparate aſſemblies, and not in the mixt company of the men, as chap. xiv.—And 'tis obſervable, that in chap. xi. that the apoſtle does not uſe the word *church or churches*, nor ſay any thing of their *praying or propheſying* therein, not eſteeming the aſſemblies

of

of women as *churches*.---But in the xiv. chap. He ſpeaks of thoſe more public aſſemblies or *churches*; and declares it as a *commandment* from the Lord, that *there* the women ſhould be intirely ſilent,---neither *pray*, *prophecy*, nor aſk queſtions. This laſt ſolution I owe chiefly to Dr. *Taylor*'s *judicious note on* Rom. xvi. 1. *at the end of his paraphraſe.*

3. I object againſt *womens voting* in the church. 1ſt. Becauſe we have no account of their any way acting, or even of their *being preſent*, at church-meetings of buſineſs.---At the church-meeting, *Acts* vi. 2, &c. For the choice of deacons, the direction is, BRETHREN look ye *out amongſt you ſeven men*, &c.---At another church-meeting upon a point of conſcience, *Acts* xv. 4, 22, 23. The *apoſtles*, *elders and brethren* are ſtiled, the WHOLE CHURCH; and debate, and determine the buſineſs they met upon, without any notice taken of the *women*.

2. Becauſe their *voting* in the church, appears to me inconſiſtent with their ſtate of ſubjection; and contrary to the expreſs ſcripture rule, concerning their behaviour in general, and in the church in particular; *viz.* that they ſhould *be in ſilence not ſpeak* in the church, *be under obedience*, *not uſurp authority over the man*, *but learn in ſilence with all ſubjection*.---Expreſſions that appear to me quite incompatible with the power of *voting* in the *church*; which ſeems to imply rule, government, at leaſt a judicial deciſion: and ſuppoſing their votes to be given by the ſilent ſign of holding up the hand, or the like, yet if a majority, as might be the caſe, they would then *apparently determine and decide againſt* the men, and conſequently exerciſe *authority over* them, and not be in *any* ſenſe in *ſubjection*.

3. Becauſe tho' women ought to enjoy the rights of conſcience and private judgment, as fully as the men; yet this may be done in the way the apoſtle points out to us; *viz.* by *their enquiring*, &c. *of their husbands*, or (which is the ſame thing, where that cannot be) of their parents, brothers, or ſome proper friends, at home; by which means their ſentiments may be known, and a regard

(XII.) But if any woman in church communion, be diſſatisfy'd with the church's proceeding, in any caſe of conſcience, ſhe may acquaint the paſtor, or any of the brethren with her uneaſineſs; who may, if neceſſary, acquaint the church therewith, which is bound to give her ſatisfaction if poſſible; if not, ſhe has power of removing her communion elſewhere.---See chap. iv. prop. iii. ſect. 5. note.

1 Cor. xiv. 35. *If they* (*the women*) *will learn any thing let them ask their huſbands at home; for it is a ſhame for a woman to ſpeak in the church.* 2 Cor. i. 24. *Not that we have dominion over your faith.*

Beſides the general duties of worſhip and diſcipline, before mentioned, there are ſeveral particular, and important ones, belonging

regard paid to them, conſiſtent with their duty of ſubjection, and the preſervation of the rights of conſcience alſo.—As for inſtance in the choice of a miniſter, they have doubtleſs a right to be ſatisfied as well as the men, and therefore ſhould be conſulted by a proper deputation from the church, and their ſentiments ſhould have their proper weight, and be duly regarded. which for all *reaſonable purpoſes* would be juſt the ſame, as if *given by vote* in the church; and ſo of other matters of conſcience and right.—For it is not the *giving* their ſentiments, but the *manner* of doing it, &c. that I object to.—

to church members as ſuch *, which may be noted under the following heads, the contents of ——

CHAP. IV.

* Moſt of theſe duties indeed belong to them as chriſtians, whether in ſpecial communion with any particular church or not; but in caſe they are, they ought to look upon themſelves under more and far greater obligations thereunto, from their more public profeſſion and ſolemn vows as before hinted. chap. ii. prop. vii. ſect. iv.

CHAP. IV.

Of the duties of church members,

I. *To their biſhops, elders, or miniſters of the word.*

II. *To one another in particular.*

III. *To the church in general to which they belong.*

IV. *In reſpect of the world.*

V. *Reſpecting their age--ſex--condition.*

VI. *To magiſtrates.*

VII. *To their domeſtics or families.*

I. TO their biſhops, elders or miniſters of the word.

The duties of church members are,

(I.) To treat them with diſtinguiſhing honour, eſteem, and love.

1 Cor. iv. 1ſt. *Let a man ſo account of us as the miniſters of Chriſt, and ſtewards of the myſteries of God.* 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well, be accounted*

worthy of double honour; *especially they that* labour *in the word and doctrine.* 1 Thes. v. 11, 12. *Know them that have the rule over you, and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake.*

(II.) Cordially to receive and submit to their administrations, in doctrine and discipline, so far as is consistent with true christian liberty, and the due preservation of the rights of conscience, and private judgment*.

1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. *Laying aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speakings, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word.* James i. 21, 22. *Lay aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word. Be doers of the word and not hearers only.* Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you.* v. 7. *And have spoken unto you the word of God.*

* Thus in a gospel church rightly constituted, there is no room for the most detestable of all tyranny (*viz.*) the arbitrary exercise of ecclesiastical power, or priestly dominion over the consciences and civil rights of mankind; and yet that there is a governing authority, and ruling power entrusted with, and invested in the proper officers of a church, is evident to me from the scriptures here quoted, and many others: tho' that power is strongly limited by the laws of Christ; and appears to be *directory*, *declarative* and *executive* only, and not legislative, or properly coercive.—*See* chap. iii. prop. *and notes there.*

God. v. 17. *And ſubmit yourſelves for they watch for your ſouls.* 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. *Addicted themſelves to the miniſtry,---ſubmit your ſelves unto ſuch.*

(III.) To follow their example in particular, ſo far as they are followers of Chriſt.

1 Cor xi. 1. *Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Chriſt.* Heb. xiii. 7. *Whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation.*

(IV.) To pray heartily for them.

1 Theſ. v. 25. Col. iv. 3. Heb. xiii. 18. *Pray for us.* 2 Theſ. iii. 1, 2. *Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free courſe, and be glorified; and that we may be delivered from unreaſonable and wicked men.*

(V.) To provide for their temporal ſupport and maintenance, in the moſt effectual manner they can.

Gal. vi. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* 1 Cor. ix. 7, 13, 14. *Who goeth to warfare of his own charge? the Lord hath ordained that they that preach the goſpel, ſhould live of the goſpel.* Mat. x. 10. *The workman is worthy of his meat.---*

And

And this ſhould be done with ſuch liberality as,

(1) May ſet them above contempt in their ſtation.

2 Cor. viii. 21. *Providing for honeſt* [καλα, decent and honourable] *things, not only in the ſight of the Lord but of men.* 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. *Let the elders that rule well be counted* worthy *of* double honour, *eſpecially they that labour in the word and doctrine: For the ſcripture ſaith, thou ſhalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: and the labourer is worthy of his reward.*

(2) Free them from the entanglements and cares of this life, ſo that they may devote themſelves intirely to their miniſtry.

2 Tim. ii. 4. *No man that warreth entangleth himſelf with the affairs of this life.* Rom. xii. 7. *Or miniſtry let us wait on our miniſtry, or he that teacheth on teaching.* 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine—Meditate on theſe things, give thyſelf* WHOLLY *to them.*

(3) Enable them to provide decently for their families:—For,

1 Tim. v. 8. *If any provide not for his own houſe he has denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel.* Rom. xii. 17. *Provide*

Provide things honeſt [or decent, καλα] *in the ſight of all men.*

4. Put them into a capacity of entertaining their friends, and aſſiſting the diſtreſſed *. For,

1 Tim. iii. 2. *A biſhop muſt be given to hoſpitality.*

(VI.) To endeavour to ſupport and encourage them under their afflictions and trials.

2 Tim.

* It is clear from all the ſcriptures above refer'd to, as well as the reaſon of things, that miniſters of the goſpel ſhould, if poſſible, devote themſelves to the work of the miniſtry.—That in *that* caſe, they have a *right* to maintenance from their people.—And that not as matter of *charity*, as ſome are ready to imagine, but of *juſtice*.—And alſo that this maintenance ought to be proportioned (as far as the peoples abilities will admit) to the ſervices expected of them, the circumſtances of their families, the nature of the places where they reſide—So that they may be, not *barely* defended from the miſeries of hunger and nakedneſs, (as is too often the caſe) but enabled to *practice* as well as preach *liberality and charity*; and ſupport their ſacred character, with a ſuitable decorum and reputation in the eye of the world.—It by no means follows, as ſome people ſeem willing to think it does, viz. that becauſe there are *ſome* inſtances of one ſort of chriſtian miniſters, exceſſively enriching themſelves by the revenues of the church, (ſometimes to the prejudice of religion) therefore others ſhould be deny'd *what* in the nature of things, is *abſolutely neceſſary* for their decent and comfortable maintenance, and the enabling them to purſue their

2 Tim. iv. 16. *At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.* Acts xii. 5. *Prayer was made by the church for* (Peter in Prison.)

(VII.) To assemble at their invitation at any fit time on due notice, for any particular duties of devotion and discipline.

Acts xiv. 27. *And when they* (Paul and Barnabas) *were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done.*

(VIII.) They should also prudently acquaint their ministers with their afflictions, and desire their prayers for and with them.

James v. 13. *Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any sick among you let him send for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.*

(IX.) If

their studies with that freedom and attention necessary for the due improvement of their minds, and the more effectual support of the credit and interest of religion; or that because their minister may have some substance of his own, that therefore the people should be excused, and leave him to spend that substance in supporting a character, which they are by the laws of Christ and common justice to support themselves, if able. See Mr. *Rees*'s sermon, entitled, *A modest plea for the maintenance of the christian ministry.*

(IX.) If they have more paſtors or teachers than one, they ſhou'd take heed of undue diſtinctions, and dividing into parties in favour of one to the prejudice of the other.

1 Cor. i. x. 12. *That there be no diviſions—every one ſaying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas.* Ch. iii. 4. *For while one ſaith I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?*

II. The duties of all chriſtians, and particularly of church members *one towards are—*

(I.) To love one another with a ſincere ſpiritual affection.

John xv. 12, *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, with a pure heart fervently.*

Which love ought to be particularly manifeſted.

(1) By bearing one anothers burdens, Gal. vi. 2.

(2) By praying one for another, James v. 16. Eph. vi. 18.

(3) By viſiting one another, eſpecially in affliction, Jam. i. 27. Mat. xxv. 36.

(4) By diſtributing to each others neceſſities, Rom. xii. 13.

(5) By

(5) By ſeeking every one another's wealth, 1 Cor. x. 24.

(6) By rejoicing with thoſe that rejoice, weeping with thoſe that weep, Rom. xii. 15.

(7) By uſing hoſpitality to each other without grudging, 1 Pet. iv. 9, 10.

(II.) They ſhould ſometimes meet together for ſocial prayer, and free converſe on religious ſubjects *.

Heb. x. 24, 25. *Let us conſider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together — But exhorting one another.* Mal. iii. 16. *Then they that feared the Lord ſpoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them.* Mat. xviii. 19, 20. *If two of you ſhall agree on earth, as touching any thing ye ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them—For where two or three are*

* *Stated* religious *conferences* in particular, ſhould be managed with great caution and prudence; or elſe inſtead of anſwering any valuable ends, they will ſerve only to expoſe the weakneſs of ſome, cheriſh the ſpiritual pride of others, bring ſtrife and contention into the church, and thereby religion itſelf into contempt. And even *ſocial prayer*, though a more manifeſt and neceſſary duty, and what ſhould be encouraged more than it is, is not without its inconveniencies and dangers, if not properly conducted.

are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them. Col. iv. 2. *Continue in prayer.* Acts xii. 5, 12. *Prayer was made of the church—many praying* (for Peter). Acts i. 14.—*all theſe continued with one accord in prayer.*

(III.) They ſhould endeavour to ſeaſon their more accidental and occaſional converſe with good things.

Col. iv. 6. *Let your ſpeech be always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt.* Epheſ. iv. 29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for edifying, that it may miniſter grace unto the hearers.*

(IV.) They ſhould cultivate peace and harmony one with another.

Epheſ. iv. 3. *Keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace.* 2 Cor. iii. 11. *Be of one mind, live in peace.* Rom. xiv. 19. *Follow after the things that make for peace.*

To this end,

(1) They ſhould be ſubject to one another in humility, 1 Pet. v. 5.

(2) Not provoke, or envy one another, Gal. v. 26.

(3) Do nothing through ſtrife or vainglory, Phil. ii. 3.

4. In

(4) In honour prefer one another, Rom. xii. 10.

(5) Forbear one another in love, Rom. xv. 1.

(6) Forgive one another if any have a quarrel, Col. iii. 13.

(7) Not avenge themſelves, but give place unto wrath, Rom. xii. 19.

(8) Not raſhly judge one another, Rom. xiv. 13. Mat. vii. 1.

(9) Speak not evil one of another, Jam. iv. 11.

(10) Avoid whiſperings and backbitings, 1 Cor. xii. 20.

(11) Terminate, as far as poſſible, all differences amongſt themſelves, 2 Cor. vi. 4, 7.

(12) Mutually give and take reproof in the ſpirit of meekneſs.

Mat. xviii. 15. *If thy brother treſpaſs— tell him his fault.* Gal. vi. 1. *Reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs.*

III. Church members in particular, have duties incumbent on them to the church in general, viz.

(1) To ſubmit cordially to the order and diſcipline of the church, ſo far as they can conſcientiouſly.

Epheſ. v. 21. *Submitting yourſelves to one another in the fear of God.* 1 Cor. xi. 22. *Or*

22. *Or deſpiſe ye the church of God?* Mat. xviii. 17. *If he neglect to hear the church.*

(2) To devote their gifts, graces and abilities, to the ſervice of the church in a proper and conſiſtent manner.

1 Pet. iv. 10. *As every man hath received the gift, ſo let him miniſter the ſame.* Rom. xii. 6, 7. *Whether prophecy, let him propheſy — or miniſtry, let him wait on his miniſtry — He that giveth, with liberality.*

(3) To take care of their poor relatives, as far as they are able, that the church be not burdened.

1 Tim. v. 4, 8; 16. *But if any widow have children, or nephews,* [εκγονα, grand-children] *let them,* i. e. the children, &c. *learn firſt to ſhew piety at home, and to requite their parents. If any provide not for his own houſe he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel—If any that believe have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged.*

4. To pay a particular regard to the intereſt of the church, and keep their places in it, as long as a good conſcience, and as far as providential circumſtances, will permit *.

* 1. In cities and great towns where there are ſeveral churches, and where the members of thoſe

Acts ii. 42. *And they continued ſtedfaſt, in the apoſtles doctrine, and breaking of bread, and prayers.* Ver. 44. *And all they that believed, were together.*--Heb. x. 23, 25. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.*

5. If they withdraw from the church's communion on any account, ſuch as great diſtance from the church, better edification, or the preſerving a good conſcience, they ſhould do it as peaceably and orderly as poſſible **.

Rom.

churches may happen to live at a conſiderable diſtance, from the place where the church to which they belong uſually meets, it cannot be unlawful for them to attend the common duties of publick worſhip occaſionally at leaſt, nearer home: though a diſtinguiſhing regard ſhould be paid to that particular ſociety with which they have connected themſelves, in order to keep up a due decorum in religion, and prevent that anarchy and confuſion, and even ruin to the very exiſtence of particular churches, which muſt be the conſequence of indiſcriminate and unconnected aſſemblies.

** 2. Where a church out of prejudice, and an uncharitable ſpirit of reſentment, or the like, denies a member a regular diſmiſſion, upon his peaceable requeſt; ſuch member may remove his communion without it; for as every particular church is a *voluntary* ſociety, it can have no right to detain any of its members, againſt their conſent, or voluntary choice.

2 Cor.

Rom. xiv. 5, 33. *Let every man be perſwaded in his own mind—for what is not of faith is ſin.* 1 Tim. iii. 3, 4, 5. *If any teach otherwiſe--from ſuch withdraw thyſelf.* 2 Tim. iii. 2. 1 Cor. x. 32. *Give none offence to the church of God.* 1 Cor. xii. 25. *That there be no ſchiſm in the body.*

6. To ſtudy the church's peace, purity, and edification.

Rom. xiv. 19. *Follow after the things that make for peace, and wherewith one may edify another.* Col. iii. 15. *To which you are called in one body.* Heb. xii. 14. *Follow after holineſs—*

To which ends particularly,

(1) They ſhould carefully ſtudy, and practiſe the duties of love, and peace before mentioned.

Epheſ. iii. 17. *Being rooted and grounded in* love.

2. They ſhould endeavour to improve their acquaintance with the principles of

2 Cor. i. 24. *Not that we have dominion over your faith. —Let every man be perſwaded in his own mind.* Rom. xiv. 5. And let it be always remember'd, as a fundamental principle in this caſe, *that Chriſt has delegated to no man, or body of men, not even to his* CHURCH, (in whatever ſenſe the word be taken) *any power, inconſiſtent with his prerogative, or ſubverſive of the natural rights of conſcience and private judgment, in ſpiritual matters.* See chap. iiii prop. viii. note there, and elſewhere.

their holy religion, as they are found in the holy ſcriptures.

Heb. v. 12. *When for the time ye ought to have been teachers of others, ye have need, that one teach you again—the firſt principles of the oracles of God.* Col. iii. 16. *Let the word of Chriſt dwell richly in you in all wiſdom.* Acts xvii. 11. *And ſearched the ſcriptures daily, whether theſe things were ſo,* John v. 39.

3. They ſhould endeavour to maintain the *liberty* of the goſpel, and the ſacred rights of conſcience, againſt all impoſitions.

Gal. v. 1, 13. *Stand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made you free—for ye have been called unto liberty.* See the concluſion.

4. They ſhould endeavour to maintain the *doctrines* of the goſpel, in their purity, againſt all falſe teachers, and their plauſible reaſonings *. Jude

* Theſe endeavours ſhould be govern'd by prudence, meekneſs, charity—and not ſuffered to break out into *angry* contentions, and *party* ſtrife, about *little* circumſtances, and *meer* modes of faith, &c. Nor into a furious zeal and perſecuting rage againſt the perſons, or the natural and civil rights and poſſeſſions, of even *infidels themſelves.*—For *the weapons of our warfare, are not carnal,* 2 Cor. x. 4. — *In meekneſs inſtructing them that oppoſe themſelves,* 2 Tim ii. 25.—All contention for the faith, in the way of rage and violence, is utterly inconſiſtent with the genius of the goſpel. See the concluſion, ſect. 8.

Jude 3. *Contend earneſtly for the faith.* 1 John iv. 1. *Believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they be of God; becauſe many falſe prophets are gone forth into the world.* Col. ii. 4, 8. *Leſt any man beguile you, thro' philoſophy, and vain deceit, after the traditions of men.* Phil. i. 27. *Striving together for the faith of the goſpel.*

(5.) They ſhould pray heartily for the church's proſperity.

Pſal. cxi. 6.—*Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem.* Iſa. lxii. 7.—*Give him no reſt. 'till he hath made Jeruſalem a praiſe.*

(IV.) There are duties, which all chriſtians, and eſpecially church members, ſhould attend to in reſpect of the *world* *, as a diſtinct body from them, *viz.*

(1.) To bear a prudent teſtimony againſt the evil practices of the world.

Rev. xviii. 4. *Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her Sins.* Eph. v. 7, 11. *Be ye not partakers therefore with them,—have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather*

 reprove

* By the *world* here, is meant all prophane and vicious perſons, who appear void of ſerious chriſtianity, and the fear of God, of what party ſoever they may *nominally* be; and not any *particular party* as ſuch, as ſome too often uncharitably apply the word.

reprove them. James i. 27. *Keep himself unspotted from the world.*--And therefore

(2.) Not to intermarry with infidels, and prophane persons *.

2 Cor. vi. 14.—*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.* 1 Cor. 7. 39. *Be married to whom she will only in the Lord.*

(3.) But to converse with them in all other respects freely, as fellow creatures, and members of the same civil and political community.

Mat. v. 47. *If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?* 2 Cor. x. 27.---*If any that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you, eat.* 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. *I wrote unto you not to keep company with fornicators,* &c.---*yet not altogether ---for then must ye needs go out of the world.*

N. B. But if any man that is called a brother be guilty of those sins, we are not to keep company with him. Verse 11.

(4.) To

* This rule does not confine church members, from marrying with those that happen not to be in actual communion with any particular church, while in other respects they appear to fear God; or pay a decent regard to the duties of morality, and sincerely assent to the christian religion as true: much less from marrying with the members of any other church.—Tho' what may be expedient in these cases, prudence must dictate.

(4.) To endeavour to live in a peaceable and reputable manner amongſt them, providing for themſelves, the neceſſaries and decencies of life, as far as poſſible.

Rom. xii. 17. *provide all things honeſt* [*decent*] *in the ſight of all men.*---2 Cor. viii. 21. Heb. xii. 14.--*Follow peace with all men.* 1 Theſ. iv. 11, 12. *Study to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs, that ye may walk honeſtly.* [ευσχημονως *decently reſpectably*] *towards them that are without, and have lack of nothing.*

(5.) To ſet them a good example, in all the duties of religion and morality.

1 Pet. ii. 12. *Having your converſation honeſt* [καλην *beautiful, honourable, reputable*] *amongſt the gentiles, that they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God.* Col. iv. 5. *Walk in wiſdom towards them that are without.* Mat. v. 16. *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they beholding your good works may glorify your father which is in heaven.*

(6.) To pray for them, and do them all the good offices in their power, (conſiſtent with other duties) even tho' their actual enemies.

1 Tim. i. 12. *I exhort, that ſupplication and prayers be made for* all *men.* Mat. v. 44. *Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you,*

and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. Tit. iii. 2. *Speak evil of no man,---be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness, unto all men.*

(V.) There are duties respecting their *age, sex, condition*, &c. to which christians, especially church members, should pay a particular regard.

(1.) Age and sex,

1 Pet. v. 5. *Ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder.* 2 Tim. ii. 22.--*Flee also youthful lusts.* --- Tit. ii. 6. *Young men also exhort to be sober-minded.* Lev. xix. 32.--*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.* ---Tit. ii. 2. *That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in the faith in charity, in patience.*---(v. 3.) *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers* [διαβολους *make bates calumniators*] *not given to much wine, teachers of good things*; (v. 4.) *That they may teach the young women, to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.* (v. 5.) *To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home,* [οικουρους *careful of domestic affairs*] *good, obedient to their husbands.*—1 Tim. ii. 9. &c. *That women adorn themselves, with modest* [κοσμιω *neat, decent, becoming*]

ing] *apparel, with ſhame facedneſs, and ſobriety, not with broidered* [πλεγμασιν *braided, plaited*] *hair* *, *or gold, or pearls, or coſtly array, but as becometh women profeſſing godlineſs, with* good works.---*Learn in ſilence---not teach---nor uſurp authority over the man.* 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4, &c. *Whoſe adorning, let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible,---a meek and quiet ſpirit, which is in the ſight of God of great price.*

(2.) Con-

* As one deſign of dreſs is, to diſtinguiſh the conditions, and ranks of life, it cannot be ſuppoſed that the apoſtle here intended to prohibit *intirely*, the *wearing of gold*, and the uſe of proper ornaments; ſeeing other ſcriptures, ſpeak of thoſe things with approbation, at leaſt without cenſure, (*Gen.* xxiv. 22. *Pſal.* xlv. 13, 14. *Mat.* vi. 29. *Prov.* xxxi. 21, 22.) Theſe precepts therefore, muſt be underſtood *comparatively*, as John vi. 27. Where our Lord ſays, *labour not for the meat that periſheth:* And are thus particularly expreſs'd, to remind chriſtian women, that the purity and dignity of their character, and the glorious hopes and expectations they had in another world, lay them under very great and ſerious obligations, to reſtrain all *undue fondneſs* for the *glittering* ornaments of dreſs; and to employ moſt of their time and care, in cultivating and adorning their *minds*, with thoſe graces and virtues, which render them amiable even in the ſight of God.--That tho' they ought to dreſs with decency and propriety, agreeable to the cuſtoms of the country, and times they live in, and to their different ages, conditions, and ranks in life; yet *herein* they ſhould follow the dictates of good ſenſe, and religion, not vanity; and take parti-

(2) Condition, &c.

1 Tim. vi. 17. &c. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God: that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themſelves in ſtore a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* 1 John iii. 17. *Whoſo hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* Jer. ix. 23. *Let not the rich man glory in his riches.* Prov. xxii. 16. *He that oppreſſeth the poor, to encreaſe his riches--ſhall ſurely come to want.* Jam. i, 9. *Let the brother of low degree* [i. e. in this world] *rejoice that he is exalted* [i. e. as a chriſtian to the hope of a better] (10) *But the rich* [in this world's goods] *in that he is made low* [i. e. bleſt with the grace of humility.] Jam. v. 9. *Grudge not one againſt another.* Heb. xiii. 5. *Be content with ſuch things as ye have.* Eccleſ. x. 20. *Curſe not the rich.* (See Luke xii. 16. chap. xvi. 19, 21. & chap.

particular care to diſtinguiſh themſelves, from the *looſer part* of their ſex; who dreſs upon vicious principles, and with vicious deſigns.

chap. v. prop. 1. ſect. 3. and texts there.) 2 Theſ. iii. 10—12. *For this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither ſhould he eat.—For ſome walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are buſy bodies.--Such we command and exhort, by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that with quietneſs they work, and eat their own bread.* And 1 Theſ. iv. 11. *do their own buſineſs and work*, &c. *

VI. There are duties which chriſtians, (church members in particular) owe to magiſtrates, &c.

viz. They muſt be ſubject and obedient to the authority of their temporal governours, kings,

* 1. From theſe ſcriptures it appears that the vices to which the *rich* are more particularly expoſed, and ſhould therefore more particularly guard againſt, are—pride, haughtineſs, exceſſive love of money, and confidence in it; idleneſs, ſelf-indulgence, vanity, luxury, wantonneſs, oppreſſion of the poor, and neglect of religion and another world.—The virtues they are more particularly called to exerciſe are—gratitude to God, humility and condeſcenſion to men, oeconomy in the management, and temperance in the enjoyment, of their riches; conſidering themſelves as the ſtewards of God; providing for their families, and dependants, in a manner agreeable to their neceſſities, and their own ſubſtance and rank in life, duly conſidered; together with a tender liberality to the poor, and a due regard to the ſupport of the intereſt of true religion and virtue, and the common good of their country.—

kings, and all that are appointed under them **, (in all things not contrary to a good conſcience, and the expreſs laws of God) and pray particularly for them.

Rom.

try.—And in avoiding thoſe and all other vices, and the cultivating theſe and all other virtues, conſiſteth that real greatneſs and excellency, to which, above all things, they ſhould aſpire.

The vices to which the poor are peculiarly liable, and ſhould be particularly watchful againſt, are—diſcontent, deſpondency, murmuring at providence, and diſtruſt of it; envying the (too often but ſeeming) happineſs of the rich; ſloth, ignorance, uncleanlineſs, rioting, theft, or other unwarrantable means of ſupplying their wants; ingratitude to their benefactors, and preſcribing to them the meaſure of their bounty.—The peculiar virtues which they are called to exerciſe, are—peaceableneſs and contentment, with the allotments of providence; endeavouring to provide for themſelves and their families by honeſt induſtry in their ſeveral ſtations and callings; gratitude to thoſe that do them good; ſubmiſſion to the juſt commands of thoſe they ſerve; reſpectful behaviour to their ſuperiors; patience under the contempt and oppreſſion they may meet with from the weakneſs or wickedneſs of the rich; making God their confidence and hope, ſeeking his favour as their true happineſs.—Virtues, that will render them eſteem'd and beloved, by all truly wiſe and good men, notwithſtanding the meanneſs and poverty that may attend them.

** 2. So that a church has no power to make any laws or canons, inconſiſtent with the juſt laws of the ſtate, or the rights of civil government; nor indeed, is there any occaſion for it; the goſpel conſtitution of a church, being (by the all-wiſe head of it) made to coincide intirely with the natural, ſocial, and civil

Rom. xiii. 1, 2, &c. *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers---for they be ordained of God; whoſoever reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God, and ſhall receive to* THEMSELVES *damnation---for he is the miniſter of God for good---an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.—Be ſubject for conſcience ſake—render tribute to whom tribute is due; cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.* Acts xxiii. 5. *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the ruler of thy people.* Tit. iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities, powers, and to obey magiſtrates.* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be to the king as ſupreme, or unto governours—Sent by him,* Ver. 17. *Honour the king.* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 3. *I exhort that prayers and ſupplications*

civil rights of all men. See chap. ii. prop. 2. and note there. And conſequently the *ſtate* muſt have a right to interfere, ſo far in the government of the *church*, as to keep it within its own proper limits, and ſecure all the juſt ends of civil government.

(2.) How little countenance the ſcriptures quoted under this propoſition, give to the ſenſeleſs doctrine of *paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance*, as taught by ſome; is ſhewn, with great clearneſs and ſtrength of reaſon, by the preſent worthy biſhop of Wincheſter, (doctor *Hoadly*) in his *meaſures of ſubmiſſion to the civil magiſtrate, conſidered.*

cations, with giving of thanks, be made for kings, and all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs, and honeſty. Eccleſ. x. 20. *Curſe not the king, no not in thy thoughts.* But Acts v. 29. *We ought to obey God rather than man.* Acts iv. 19. *Whether it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye?* Dan. iii. 18. *Be it known unto thee O king, that we will not ſerve thy gods, nor worſhip the golden image which thou haſt ſet up.* Mat. xxii. 21. *Render unto Cæſar, the things that are Cæſar's; and unto God, the things that are God's.*

VII. Church members, in particular, ſhould be careful to diſcharge all thoſe ſocial duties, that belong to their domeſtic, or family relations and connections.

Epheſ. v. 22. *Wives ſubmit yourſelves to your own huſbands.* Verſe 25. *Huſbands love your wives.* Verſe 28. *as their own bodies.* Verſe 23. *So love his wife as himſelf; and the wife ſee that ſhe reverence her huſband.* See Col. iii. 18, 19. 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2, &c. Col. iii. 20, 21. *Children obey your parents in all things.* 1 Tim. v. 4. *To requite their parents— Fathers provoke not your children to wrath.*--But Epheſ. vi. 4. *bring them*

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ver. 2. *Honour thy father and mother.* Col. iii. 22, 23. Ephes. vi. 5, 6, 7. *Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh, in all things — with fear and trembling—not with eye service, but in singleness of heart—And whatever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men — as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, With good will.* 1 Tim. vi. 1, 4. *Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their masters worthy of all honour; and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service.* Tit. ii. 9, 10. *Exhort servants to be obedient unto their masters, and please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but shewing good fidelity.* 1 Pet. ii. 18. *Servants, be subject to your own masters, with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.* Col. iv. 1. *Masters give unto your servants, that which is just and equal.* Ephes. vi. 9. *forbearing threatning, knowing that your master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.* Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren*

brethren or of thy ſtranger within thy gates---at his day thou ſhalt give him his hire---leſt he cry againſt thee unto the Lord--and it be a ſin unto thee. Jer. xxii. 13. *Wo unto him---that uſeth his neighbours ſervice, without wages, and giveth him not for his work.* Jam. v. 1, 4. *Go to now ye rich men, weep for the miſeries that ſhall come upon you—Behold the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them that have reaped, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* — In theſe family duties are included, the duties of family prayer, and inſtruction; juſtice and mercy.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the duties of particular churches, that deſerve more eſpecial notice.

I. *Towards their own members.*

II. *Towards other churches, their members, miniſters,* &c.

1ſt. TOWARDS their own members, 'tis a church's duty,

(I.) To admit every one of them (unleſs under cenſure) to an equal joint right, and title to, and ſhare in, all the ſpiritual and temporal privileges which they enjoy as a church.

Gal. iii. 28.---*Ye are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.* Act ii. 44. *And they that believed had all things common* *.

I (II.) And

* But, however extenſive this common intereſt and right might be in the apoſtles days, it can now be extended no farther, than the privileges and poſſeſſions which the church enjoys as a body; and not to any one's particular perſonal property. See chap. ii. prop. 7. ſect. 6. and note there.

(II.) And consequently, to assemble for the discharge of their common duties, and enjoyment of their common privileges, at such time, and in such manner that all, if possible, may share in them.

1 Cor. xi. 33. *When ye come together to eat,* (*i. e.* the Lord's Supper) *tarry one for another.*

(III.) To take care of their poor, and supply their necessities.

Deut. xv. 11. *I command thee saying, thou shalt open thy hand* wide *unto thy brother, unto thy poor and thy needy, in thy land.* Gal. ii. 10. *We should remember the poor.* Rom. xii. 13. *Distributing to the necessities of the saints.* 1 John iii. 17. *See also* chap. iv. prop. v. *and texts there.*

And for the better discharge of this duty, 'tis evident, the office of deacons was instituted in the church. *Acts* vi. 17.

(IV.) The whole church should sympathize, in the joys and sorrows of every particular member.

1 Cor. xii. 26. *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

(V.) They

(V.) They ſhould put up their united prayers, for any one of them in diſtreſs.

Acts xii. 5.---*And prayer was made without ceaſing of the church unto God, for him* (i. e. *Peter in priſon.*)

(VI.) They are to exerciſe a Godly care and diſcipline over them, to their edification, without partiality.

James ii. 9. *If ye have a reſpect to perſons, ye commit ſin.*---1 Theſ. v. 14. *Brethren warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, ſupport the weak.* Jude 16. *Not having mens perſons in admiration, to advantage.* Heb. xii. 15. *Looking diligently leſt any fail of the grace of God,---and any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up, trouble you.*

(VII.) To grant them letters of diſmiſſion and recommendation to other churches, when deſired, ſo far as they can, conſiſtent with the honour of Chriſt, and a good conſcience.

2 Cor. iii. 1. *Need we epiſtles of recommendation to you---or from you?* Rom. xvi. 1. *I commend unto you Phebe our ſiſter, a ſervant of the church of Cenchrea.* 2 Cor. i. 24. *Not that we have dominion over your faith.*

2. Towards other churches, their members and miniſters, 'tis a church's duty.

(I) To own them as churches of Chriſt, and hold chriſtian communion with them, in all the duties and privileges of their common religion, as far as they have opportunity, and can do it with a good conſciſcience. [See the concluſion.]

Rom. vi. 16. *The churches of Chriſt ſalute you.* 1 Pet. v. 13. *The church at Babylon elected together with you.* Gal. iii. 28. *Ye are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.* 1 Cor. xii. 13, 20. *Many members, yet but one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free.* 1 John i. 7. *We have fellowſhip one with another.* 1 Cor. i. 2, 3. *Unto the church of God at Corinth —with all that in every place call on our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, Grace be unto you.* 1 Theſ. iv. 9, 10. *Ye are taught of God, to love one another.—And ye do it towards all the brethren in Macedonia.*

(II) To receive their members, when recommended to them, and pay them the regard their character and condition requires.

Rom. xvi. 1, 2. *I commend unto you Phebe our ſiſter---receive her in the Lord as becometh ſaints, and aſſiſt her in whatever*

ever buſineſs ſhe hath need of you. Phil. ii. 29. *Hold ſuch in reputation.* 2 Cor. viii. 23, 24. *They are the meſſengers of the churches, ſhew ye to them and before the churches the proof of your love.* 3 John 8. *We ought to receive ſuch, that we may be fellow helpers of the truth.*

(III) To impart to other churches, ſuch aſſiſtance as they want, and their own abilities and opportunities afford.

Acts xi. 29, 30. The diſciples (at Antioch) ſent relief, according to their abilities, to the poor ſaints in Judea. 1 Cor. xvi. 1. *Concerning the collection for the ſaints, as I had given orders to the churches of Galatia. Even ſo do ye.* Col. iv. 16, 17. *And when this epiſtle is read with you, cauſe alſo that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans.*

(IV) To make uſe of their advice, in any matters of difficulty and importance.

Acts xv. 2. *They (the church at Antioch) determined that Paul and Barnabas ſhould go up to Jeruſalem, unto the apoſtles and elders, about this queſtion,* i. e. *of the neceſſity of* circumciſion.

THE

CONCLUSION.

THUS, according to my propoſal, I have endeavoured with all poſſible candour and impartiality, to give my readers a *plain practicable plan of* SOCIAL RELIGION, drawn from the holy ſcriptures; and particularly from thoſe perfect and authentic models there exhibited (viz.) *The churches of the apoſtolic age*.---Models, every way adapted to the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and the gracious and moral deſign of Chriſt's kingdom--- intirely clear therefore, of all *bigotry*, *ſuperſtition*, and *prieſtcraft*; of the *wiſdom* and *the folly of this world:* and if not proved to be *expreſsly* of *divine appointment*, yet bearing the ſtrongeſt marks of the divine *interpoſition* and *approbation:* capable of anſwering *all* the great ends of ſocial religion, and conſequently highly worthy of the neareſt imitation poſſible, by all chriſtian ſocieties, in every ſucceeding age.

As a proper cloſe of the whole, I here add a few general obſervations, in favour of

of a *greater freedom in church communion*, than is commonly practiſed: together with a perſwaſive to *peace* and *charity*, amongſt ſuch as think themſelves obliged to diſſent from one another.

1. Though the true *Chriſtian church*, becauſe of the great numbers of its members, and their diſperſion through the world, muſt neceſſarily be branch'd out into many diſtinct ſocieties; yet as they are all profeſſedly embark'd in the ſame cauſe, under one head of vital influence and government, they are to be conſidered but as parts of the ſame whole; compoſing one intire ſpiritual body. Gal. iii. 28. *Ye are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.* 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. *As--all the members of that one body, being many are one body, ſo alſo is Chriſt*—for by one ſpirit, we are baptiſed into one body. Rom. xii. 5. *We being many are one body in Chriſt, and members one of another.* Epheſ. ii. 14, 22. And for this reaſon amongſt many others, they ought all to conſider themſelves, as under the moſt ſacred obligations to do every thing in their power, to preſerve this *unity of the ſpirit*, in the *bonds of peace and love*, as inviolable as poſſible, in the face of the world. To this end it is abſolutely neceſſary, that, however different and independent in *ſome reſpects*, any of theſe ſocieties may be, they ſhould be *all* form'd upon the moſt *catholic*

and *uniting* principles, *upon the whole:* and by ſome *common external* means or bond of *ſocial unity*, maintain (if poſſible) a viſible communion one with another.—Such principles are, I think, pointed out in the preceeding pages, as collected from the word of God: and ſuch a means is the Lord's Supper *, as being not only in its own nature, extreamly well adapted to anſwer that purpoſe, but inſtituted partly with that deſign. 1 Cor. x. 16. *The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt?---The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt?—— For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread. —— I would not that ye ſhould have fellowſhip with the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils.* From whence, I think, it fully appears, that this inſtitution was intended, amongſt other things, to be a ſtanding, *viſible, external* pledge and means, of that divine *union* and *fellowſhip*, *all* true chriſtians have with Chriſt, and one another in ONE BODY, as morally

* *Baptiſm*, indeed, by which we are firſt *formally* incorporated into the viſible church, or body of Chriſt, is the beginning and foundation of this *external communion*; but the *Lord's Supper*, is beſt adapted, for the conſtant ſupport and continual manifeſtation of it.

morally diſtinguiſhed and ſeparated from the world. So that though it be unqueſtionably the duty of chriſtian churches to guard the ſacred table, from the approaches of the prophane and vicious: it is no leſs their duty to lay it as open as poſſible to the free acceſs of ALL, who appear to love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, and are deſirous of walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameleſs.

2. For any chriſtian ſociety therefore, to deny their brethren communion with them at the Lord's Table, ONLY upon the account of their different opinions about the meer modes of religion, (which is too much the caſe) muſt be intirely inconſiſtent with their common relation to Chriſt, and one another; the many obligations to unity reſulting from it, and the duty of keeping that ordinance as it is delivered to them in the ſcriptures (1 Cor. xi. 2.) i. e. The keeping it *in that place* of ſuperiority to leſſer things, and uſing it for *thoſe ends*, for which it was appointed.

Thoſe of the *eſtabliſhment*, may perhaps upon *their principles*, be allowed ſome ſhew of reaſon for ſuch a meaſure; but the *proteſtant diſſenters*, as making ſtill higher pretences to liberty, ſeem to me, to act in flat contradiction to thoſe pretences, and the avowed reaſons of their diſſent, when THEY

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ſet up the exerciſe of an excluding power in the church of God, on ſuch occaſions; or attempt to impoſe terms of communion not clearly laid down, or poſitively required as ſuch, in the ſcriptures; or not neceſſary to the credible profeſſion of the chriſtian religion, and the ſecuring the main ends of the goſpel inſtitutions. And yet this is too commonly done amongſt *them*. — They plead exemption from all human authority in matters of conſcience, as the natural right of reaſon, confirmed by revelation; and yet in the caſe before us, really exerciſe ſuch an authority themſelves, to the prejudice of the rights of others. — They complain of unſcriptural impoſitions in the worſhip of God, and their being obliged to diſſent (partly at leaſt) on that account; and yet by inſiſting upon unſcriptural terms of communion in their own ſocieties, they actually become the abettors of ſuch impoſitions, and oblige others to diſſent from them; or as the apoſtle with great ſpirit and propriety expreſſes it (Acts xv. 10.) *Put a yoke upon the neck of the diſciples, which neither they, nor their fathers, were able to bear.* —A conduct this, ſo ſtrange and inconſiſtent, that it is no eaſy matter to think of any thing like a reaſonable excuſe for it.--- The moſt reaſonable I can think of is, the want of a thorough knowledge and conſideration

ſideration of the nature of chriſtian liberty, and the whole intention of the ſacred ſupper; and in what the real conſtitutional principles, and diſcipline of chriſtian churches conſiſt: or perhaps the dominion of ſome prejudices of education and cuſtom inadvertently indulged, in favour of particular, and *meerly human* ſyſtems of doctrine and worſhip; which though in *words* and even intentions, they may be ready to acknowledge *fallible* and imperfect; they are ſometimes *in fact*, too ready to treat, with the implicite veneration and confidence, due only to the *infallible* oracles of God.

3. It is granted that every chriſtian church has a right to judge of the fitneſs of thoſe that offer themſelves to her communion; and to admit or reject them according as they do or do not appear poſſeſs'd of the qualifications, really neceſſary for that purpoſe,—but then, the church is only to *judge of*, not appoint thoſe qualifications; and ought to make the *laws of Chriſt*, and not *her own inventions*, the *rule* of her judgment. What thoſe qualifications are, has been ſhewn at large, chap. iii. It is enough for my preſent purpoſe, to obſerve in the general, (what I ſhould think our ſcrupulous brethren themſelves muſt allow, *viz.*) ---That the Lord's Supper, being the *common* pledge of chriſtian *unity*, and an appointed

pointed means of the grace neceſſary to the comfort and edification of *all* chriſtians in *common*; it muſt be their duty and privilege in *common*; and conſequently,---That the qualifications inſiſted on by any church, as the terms of admiſſion to communion in it, ſhould be *ſuch, and* ONLY *ſuch*, as are *common* to *all* who make a credible profeſſion of the chriſtian faith, ſuch as they may *all* conſcientiouſly comply with;---and ſuch as agree with the general nature, and are neceſſary to anſwer all the moral and gracious ends of the inſtitution; and therefore, not any of thoſe *punctilious peculiarities*, our brethren ſo ſtrenuouſly inſiſt on in that caſe; which are to be found only amongſt themſelves, or their own party; which numbers of ſincere chriſtians of diſtinguiſhed judgment and piety, cannot poſſibly comply with; which are not, in the leaſt degree, neceſſary to anſwer any one end of the inſtitution; and which under their management, are made to contradict, inſtead of agree with, its general nature and deſign.

Jeſus Chriſt the great prophet of his church, appears to have the ſame general concern and care for the happineſs of *all* his obedient people;—knows the great importance of this ordinance to their ſpiritual life; graciouſly endows them *all* in *common* with every

every moral qualification for it; and ſolemnly charges them *all*, religiouſly to obſerve it; and therefore, I cannot but conclude, that if he had judged his deſign in it could not have been fully anſwered, or his people's duty of obſerving it acceptably perform'd, without an *intire uniformity of judgment and practice*, in thoſe particular points our brethren are ſo zealouſly concern'd for, he would have ſpoken of them with ſuch clearneſs and preciſion, that it ſhould have been impoſſible for any of his ſincere followers, who endeavoured to know his will, to have miſtaken him; and conſequently that they would *all* as generally have been bleſt with *this* indiſpenſible requiſite, this uniformity of judgment, as with any other: whereas the contrary of all this, is undeniably the fact.——Many of the pious followers of Chriſt, who have ſincerely and diligently enquired after the knowledge of his will, in theſe diſputable niceties, have been, and ſtill are, of different ſentiments about them. And 'tis to me incredible that ſo wiſe and gracious a lawgiver, ſhould ſuſpend ſo important a branch of inſtituted worſhip, as his ſupper, upon points, that have no concern with the acceptable performance of our duty in it, or the enjoyment of any one of the benefits

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ariſing from it: and ſtill more incredible, that he ſhould make an intire unanimity in thoſe points, one of the qualifications, indiſpenſibly neceſſary to that ordinance; and at the ſame time very well knew, that it would be utterly impoſſible for myriads of true believers in him, to come at ſuch a unanimity, by any means in their power.

We may therefore I think fairly conclude, that no difference in any of the *non eſſential modes* of religion, can be any juſt bar to our communing together at the Lord's Table; or give any chriſtian ſociety a reaſonable and warrantable pretence, for excluding their fellow chriſtians, from a part with them, in that deſirable and neceſſary appointment; but that all who are really intitled to the chriſtian name, and the *internal* bleſſings of the chriſtian covenant, ſhould, upon a credible profeſſion and evidence thereof, be admitted to all the *external* privileges of the chriſtian church.

4. But that we may be quite clear in this caſe, and know of a certainty, how far the power and duty of any church extends, as to the admiſſion and rejection of ſuch as propoſe themſelves for communion with them at the Lord's Table, we muſt have recourſe to the precepts and examples recorded in our Bibles. And here, in order to overbalance the ſtrong preſumptive evidence, already

already produced, in favour of the more catholic, againſt the more limited communion; We ought to expect the *cleareſt* and moſt *expreſs direction*, for the prohibition of the former, or the maintenance of the latter, or both; I ſay *expreſs* direction; becauſe it cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed that our Lord, who every where claims to himſelf the ſpecial ſovereignty and dominion of the church, would leave ſuch a degree of diſcretional power in *any of our weak hands*, as that of judging and determining meerly at our pleaſure; or deciding by our arbitrary interpretations, againſt the pious deſires and claims of his beloved people, in an affair that ſo nearly concerns his honour and their comfort and duty, as the communion of the ſacred table moſt certainly does. *His expreſs* direction therefore I ſay, and not *our wills*, his *very word* and not *our private opinions* about it, or *fallible deductions* from it, ought to be expected in this caſe; in order to juſtify upon proteſtant principles the limited communion I am pleading againſt. But after the moſt deliberate and impartial inquiry, I have been able hitherto to make into the records of the *Bible*, I can find no ſuch *direction* there. *That* ſays a great deal, about our common union in Chriſt; our equal title to, and joint intereſt in, all the privileges of the houſe of God; as being all his

his children by the ſame faith; as profeſſedly devoted to him by the ſame baptiſm, (at leaſt as to what is eſſential to that purpoſe) and therefore, ſuppoſing our differences about many things there written, ſtrenuouſly inſiſteth upon it as our indiſpenſile duty—*That we ſtudy the things that make for peace, keep the unity of the ſpirit,—conſider one another to provoke unto love, and good works,---mark them that cauſe diviſions,---comfort, edify, ſubmit to, and bear with one another*;--*receive the weak in faith, not* (εις διακρισεις διαλογισμων) *judging* or making a difference between them and our ſelves, on the account of *doubtful opinions.---Be perſwaded every man in his own mind*; *but not judge our brother, or put a ſtumbling block in his way*; *for that he who in any of theſe* (diſputable) *things ſerveth Chriſt is accepted of God*, &c. In this *catholic ſtile* we have *line upon line, precept upon precept.*—But, that one party of true believers in Chriſt, ſhould have ſuch a dominion over the conſciences and religious practices of the reſt, as to make new laws of Communion at the Lord's Table for them; or ſo to interpret thoſe already made by Chriſt, as prejudice the common right of their brethren to partake with them there; or, that they ſhould have any authority to exclude their fellow chriſtians, the enjoyment

ment of that privilege with themſelves, upon account of unavoidable differences about the *non-eſſentials* of the chriſtian profeſſion (which is what our brethren ſeem to take for granted) of *this*, I ſay, or of any thing like it, there is not the leaſt mention in the ſacred canon; much leſs any ſuch *clear and expreſs direction*, as the caſe evidently requires.

And as to the ſcripture *examples*, they appear to me every where intirely in favour of *catholic communion*. In the *Old* Teſtament, we find, not only *Melchiſedec* and *Abraham*, but *Moſes* and *Jethro*, and others, communing occaſionally together in ſacred ordinances, notwithſtanding their different forms of religion; and, which is ſtill more to the purpoſe, in the *New* Teſtament we read, that the primitive chriſtians, notwithſtanding very many, and ſome very wide differences amongſt them, upon points they thought of the higheſt conſequence, *were together, with one accord in breaking of bread* (*viz.* at the Lord's Supper) *as well as prayers*. And when neceſſarily ſeparated, and ſettled in diſtinct churches, they ſtill preſerved their common unity, and mutually acknowledged, and received to their communion, their reſpective members, upon all requiſite occaſions: if at any time they did otherwiſe, and attempted an impoſing pre-eminence, or excluding power, they were

zealouſly oppoſed, and ſeverely reproved by the apoſtles (*Act* xv. 1, 10. 3 *John* ix. 10.) as violators of the rights of conſcience, enemies to the *liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free*, and common diſturbers of the peace, and viſible uniformity of the univerſal church, which they had been taught to preſerve with the greateſt tenderneſs and veneration, as of the higheſt importance to the credit and intereſt of their holy religion. [Conſult *Act*. i. 14, 23. chap. ii. 42. chap. xv. 1,--10,--24,--28. *Rom.* xii. 4, 5. chap. xiv. 1. to the end. chap. xv. 1, 7. chap. xvi. 17. 1 *Cor.* ii. 3, 10--15. chap. xi. 16, 18. chap. xii. 12, 13, 20, 28. chap. x. 16, 17. *Epheſ.* ii. 13, 14, 22. *Gal.* iii. 28. 3 *John* 9, 10, *&c. &c.*] All which being duly conſidered, I ſhould think it muſt appear to every unprejudiced mind, that limiting the communion of the Lord's Table, to a uniformity of judgment and practice in the leſſer diſputable points of religion, not eſſential to the chriſtian profeſſion, is contrary to the principles upon which chriſtian churches ought to be founded, the deſign of the ordinance it ſelf; and not only *unwarranted*, but even *oppoſed* by the word of God. And,

5. If, with what has been ſaid, we alſo thoroughly conſider the nature and tendency of this *limiting impoſing power* in the church, we muſt acknowledge it is in *fact* (however contrary the intention) nothing

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leſs than aſſuming a legiſlative authority in the kingdom of Chriſt; a lording it over, and judging his heritage in matters of conſcience, and the enjoyment of their evangelical privileges, to which he has entitled them by his general charter;---and conſequently a bold and preſumptuous invaſion not only of *their rights*, but even of the *ſacred prerogatives of his ſovereignty*. Nor are the actual, and but too common *effects* of it, with reſpect to the honour of Chriſt, the edification and comfort of many pious chriſtians in particular, and the union, peace and proſperity of the church in general, leſs *alarming* than *evident*.--For by the exerciſe of this power, do we not as much as in *us* lies, compel our fellow chriſtians to live in the *neglect* (at leaſt) of that *expreſs* command of Chriſt *do this in remembrance of me?*--deprive them of an ordinance peculiarly adapted to, and neceſſary for, the improvement of their graces and virtues?--thruſt out of the *viſible* church with marks of *diſhonour* and *reprobation (for what more can we do to reprobates themſelves?)* thoſe whom Chriſt himſelf has brought into it; and ſealed with his ſpirit as the *heirs of glory?* and thus by making no difference between the *pious* and the *prophane*, thoſe that *ſerve God*, and thoſe that *ſerve him not*, do we not confound the church with the world, the kingdom of Chriſt with that of ſatan? or by forcing our

brethren or ourſelves into ſeparate communities, open a wide door for ſtrife and contention, and the ſetting up of many oppoſite intereſts, or little ſpiritual factions in the church, who by their mutual jealouſies, and unchriſtian animoſities, actually *divide the houſe of God againſt itſelf?*--are not theſe (more or leſs) the effects, the *common* and *viſible*, and indeed the *natural*, and many of them the *inevitable* effects, of a too ſevere and narrow limitation of church communion; even among ſome *well-meaning* chriſtians? and are they not at beſt very ſerious and alarming?

But when this evil ſpirit of *impoſition*, happens to get poſſeſſion of violent and malevolent minds, not unfrequent amongſt the *ſticklers* for religion; it breaks through all reſtraints, and leads the unhappy creatures, with a blind and furious zeal to ſacrifice, not only chriſtian moderation and charity, the common unity and peace of chriſtian ſocieties, their own reaſon and humanity, but too often, even the *Bible* itſelf to ſupport their pretended *religious* intereſt; *i. e.* their own little peculiarities, and ſenſeleſs ſuperſtition; to the great encreaſe of the numbers and joy of the enemies of chriſtianity. And indeed from whence come all the ſhocking evils, which fill ſo many pages (I might ſay volumes) of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory;---from whence our religious *wars and fightings*, burnings

burnings and maſſacres; the ſolemn cruelties of the popiſh inquiſitions, and the long train of holy violences, that have ſometimes almoſt depopulated kingdoms; --- from whence originally come they, but from this *luſt* of ſpiritual law-making; or the exerciſe of an unwarrantable impoſing power, and meer human authority in the church of God?--

And is it not matter of the moſt ſerious grief and aſtoniſhment, that a ſpirit which ſavours ſo ſtrongly of antichriſtian infallibility and perſecution; animates every ſyſtem of ſpiritual tyranny, and has been for ages the ſad cauſe of ſo many ſins and miſeries in the church; the diſgrace of the chriſtian name; the bane of vital religion; and contributed ſo much to the triumphs of infidelity; ſhould meet with the countenance it has done, and ſtill does, in the chriſtian world; and its rigid and oppreſſive dictates, become *fundamental principles*, in the eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, of even *proteſtant ſocieties!*

6. I readily acknowledge, that there are many, both of the eſtabliſhed church, and the diſſenters, who profeſs to make it matter of conſcience, to maintain a ſtricter communion than what I am pleading for; whoſe piety and charity, in all other inſtances are ſo conſpicuous, and carry with them ſuch ſtrong marks of chriſtian ſincerity, that

it would be doing them great injuſtice, ſo much as to *ſuſpect* them of acting knowingly from uncharitable principles, or with any injurious or oppreſſive deſign. They cannot indeed but acknowledge, that by this ſtrictneſs, they muſt unavoidably exclude from their church fellowſhip, *many*, whom they really love and eſteem as their brethren in Chriſt; and conſequently oblige them to ſet up ſeparate Societies, in order to diſcharge the duty, and enjoy the advantages of worſhiping GOD according to their conſciences. But then they think they excuſe themſelves, by pleading--*that they very readily allow their brethren a* right *to ſuch a ſeparation, and are deſirous of treating them, in all other reſpects, as their fellow chriſtians; and therefore cannot fairly be ſaid to* impoſe *on them.--That where opinions and practices are really different* (*tho' in leſſer things only*) *and whilſt our infirmities are ſo many and great, the grace of charity, and bleſſings of peace, may, upon the whole, be better preſerved and cultivated in ſeparate, than in mixed communities.--That in the latter, truth muſt be ſlighted, if not given up, and error countenanced; or many angry contentions be continually ariſing, on one ſide or the other;--and that as they do in their conſciences believe this ſtrictneſs, moſt pleaſing to God, and the neceſſary means of preſerving the purity of religion, they think it their duty to maintain it.*

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In anſwer to this, I would here particularly apply, with ſome neceſſary additions, what has been in the general hinted before, (*viz.*)

(1) That it is their duty not only to love their brethren, and ſhew their charity in ſome inſtances, that may happen to ſuit with their particular favourite opinions, but alſo in the more ſelf denying; eſpecially in ſuch as concern their ſpiritual welfare, and the unity of the church; which by falling more directly under the notice of the public, *diſtinguiſh* them *as the diſciples of Chriſt*; as the communion of the ſacred Supper moſt evidently does —(2) That as they themſelves allow this inſtitution to be as much the duty of their chriſtian brethren whom they reject, as their own; and as neither ſcripture, nor reaſon, make any qualifications *neceſſary* in order for *one ſet* of chriſtians to commune with *another* therein, but what are *neceſſary* to the *communion itſelf*; it follows, that the inſiſting upon any other; ſo far as to reject their brethren, meerly for the want of them, is, in effect (tho' not in deſign) a *real impoſition* on them, as it forces them to the unhappy alternative, of either living in the neglect of an important and deſirable duty; or of ſetting up ſeparate communities; and thereby dividing (at leaſt) the *external uniformity* of the *viſible catholic church*, which they think is both their duty and glory to

preſerve.—(3) That difference in opinion and practice, in the *non-eſſentials* of the chriſtian profeſſion, is ſo far from being any where in ſcripture, allow'd as a reaſon for compelling one another into ſeparate communities, that on the contrary, it is uſed as a reaſon for our greater zeal and care to preſerve our union; and conſequently, as an occaſion of more fully exemplifying the fervency and ſincerity of our charity.—(4) That *diſſentient ſeparations* in ſuch a body as the church, whoſe characteriſtic is a divine *union* as *the body of Chriſt*, is abſurd and prepoſterous; only excuſable, when thro' unwarrantable impoſitions, and corruptions intolerably offenſive to conſcience, it becomes unavoidable; and therefore ought not by ſuch impoſitions and offences to be promoted.—(5) That as the principle upon which our brethren go in this caſe, is in its own nature a *dividing one*, it cannot juſtly be ſuppoſed, to do *more* towards the preſervation of *peace* and *charity*, than the contrary principle I am pleading for, which as naturally leads to *forbearance* and *unity*.---(6) That in order to communion upon the more catholic plan, *no truth* is required to be given up, nor its *real* importance any way leſſen'd; but only *doubtful queſtions* about it, kept in their proper place; viz. a due ſubordination to *plain indiſputable duties*. Nor indeed does truth itſelf require, or its importance juſtify, any meaſures

meaſures that are in themſelves wrong, or unwarranted by the word of God, to ſupport it.——(7) That tho' the paying a reverential regard to the dictates of conſcience, argues a degree of piety and virtue highly commendable; yet they ſhould remember that even *conſcience itſelf* may be miſtaken; and has ſometimes been pleaded in defence of the moſt furious perſecutions; as the apoſtle *Paul* himſelf witneſſes, *Acts* xxiii. 9.—And as our brethren, from the very nature and tendency of their rigid principles, are more particularly in danger of falling into the miſtakes of unwarrantable zeal, they ſhould be ſo much the more careful that their conſciences be indeed rightly informed, and kept within their proper limits, (viz.) *an intire ſubjection to the expreſs laws and appointments of Chriſt:* and where the queſtion is doubtful, always incline to the *forbearing and uniting*, and not (as they are too apt to do) to the *impoſing and dividing* ſide. For the want of this care, conſcience many times contracts a falſe and ſuperſtitious tenderneſs, and under a notion of juſt zeal for truth, and the purity of thoſe inſtitutions, which concern the *leſſer appendages* of religion, leads us to offend againſt the *eſſential* duties of *peace and charity*, without a due regard to which, the moſt ſcrupulous exactneſs about the other, will be of no more account in the

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ſight of God, than the punctilious *righteouſneſs of the ſcribes and phariſees*; and an evidence that like them, we have not learnt the meaning of that text.---*I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice*, which our Lord has taught us to apply as a general rule in all ſuch caſes, Mat. xxi. 1---7---21.--- (8.) However certainly in the right on this head, our brethren may think themſelves, they are ſtill as certainly but *fallible men*; and therefore that confidence can give them no authority, to make their *own private interpretations* of *doubtful uneſſential peculiarities*, conditions of communion at the Lord's Table, ſo as thereby to exclude thoſe that differ from them.--- And thus (9.) Upon the whole, I cannot but conclude, That if this *narrow dividing* notion were intirely given up, and a *free* and *open communion* maintain'd amongſt us; *in which* ALL, *who appear'd to hold the doctrines, and practiſe the duties eſſential to the chriſtian character and profeſſion might join* (ſtill preſerving a due regard to the ſupport of particular ſocieties*) it would be ſo far from producing any conſequences prejudicial to the intereſt of *truth* and *peace*; that on the contrary, it would be attended with many the moſt deſirable and ſalutary to both.--Our frequent meeting one

* See chap. ii. prop. iv. and notes. Ch. iv. prop. iii. ſect. 4. and notes.

one another, and worſhipping together in ſo ſolemn and endearing an ordinance, as the Lord's Supper, upon ſuch mutually condeſcending and generous principles, as we ſhould do in the caſe ſuppoſed; muſt certainly have (beſides the general advantages) a particular and powerful tendency, to ſubdue our mutual prejudices---remove the occaſions of our jealouſies and animoſities---keep in awe the angry and contentious paſſions --- harmonize our ſpirits --- inſpire us with the moſt ardent and ſincere friendſhip, ---and thus enable us to carry our ſocial unity to the greateſt heights of perfection it is capable of, this ſide heaven: which would not only fully juſtify our pretenſions, to the moſt peaceable and benevolent ſyſtem of religion in the world, but alſo more clearly evince the divine original of the *church*, and render her appearance far more illuſtrious and venerable than ever, ſince the apoſtolic times --- and preſage, at leaſt, the accompliſhment of thoſe glorious propheſies, concerning her future greatneſs and felicity; *When her light ſhall come---and the nations of the ſaved ſhall walk in her brightneſs. --- When ſhe ſhall have no need either of the ſun or of the moon*; but *God himſelf and the Lamb dwell in her as her light and glory*, &c. Iſa. LX. 1. Rev. xxi. 1, &c.--Effects theſe, worthy of every chriſtian's moſt ardent prayers, and unwearied endeavours; but which, I may

may venture to say, no *imposing separating zeal*, in favour of the unessential modes of religion, can have the least tendency to produce.

7. But, however just and reasonable this amicable coalition amongst all serious christians may be in it self; however desirable and necessary to the perfection of *social religion*, the honour of the christian profession, and true felicity and glory of the church, &c. It has, even in *this* country of *protestantism* and *liberty*, many and great difficulties opposed to it, from --- *The ambitious views of the politicians of this world— The selfish intemperate zeal of the leaders of all parties --- The natural weaknesses and prejudices of the common people --- The tyranny of long settled rules and customs amongst some --- and the authority of legal establishments, too limited and partial amongst others*; so that there is little or no hope of its being very soon effected: though nevertheless our duty, to do all we can consistently towards it. And indeed by how much the more great and numerous the difficulties are, with so much the more spirit and resolution, prudence and patience, should our endeavours to remove them be exerted.

To this end it will be particularly necessary on all sides --- That we divest our selves, as far as possible, of all prejudice, anger, pride, petulence, obstinacy; and inquire

inquire after *truth*, with ſobriety, patience, candour; an humble dependence on the influences of the divine Spirit, and fervent and conſtant prayers for them. --- That we are willing to be convinced of our errors, and when upon due deliberation we are ſo, as willing to renounce them, and embrace truth, however unfaſhionable and unpopular her appearance, or however contrary to our former opinions. And with this temper of mind, we ſhould particularly read and ſtudy the BIBLE. There the pure and uncorrupted fountains of truth and wiſdom, of righteouſneſs and peace, and real religion, are laid open to all (amongſt us) that are willing to partake of them; ſo that the unlearned, as well as the learned, thoſe that have neither time nor capacity to enter into nice diſquiſitions, and long and curious reaſonings about religion, as well as thoſe that have; if they ſincerely endeavour to enter into the pure and genuine ſpirit of that *divine book*, get it transfuſed into their hearts, embrace its plain unſophiſticated meaning, and practically conform to it in their lives; they ſhall aſſuredly know ſo much of the mind of God in it, as is neceſſary to their comfort and uſefulneſs, and the right diſcharge of their reſpective duties in this world, and their complete and everlaſting felicity in the next, as *Hoſ.* vi. 3. *Prov.* ii. 2, 3. *Mat.* vii. 7. *John* vii. 17. *Jam.* i. 5,

21,

21, 22. 1 *Pet.* ii. 1, 2. *John* vi. 47. clearly prove. Nor is there any thing (as a means) that can ſo effectually cure, or preſerve us from, that *ignorance and corrupt narrowneſs of mind*, from whence all our diſſentions and ſeparations ariſe; or ſo effectually enlarge and warm our hearts, with that pure and fraternal benevolence, neceſſary to a genuine and laſting union in the duties of religion, as ſuch an *intimate* and *influential* acquaintance with the ſcriptures; or as the apoſtle expreſſes it, *the word of Chriſt dwelling in us richly, in all wiſdom*, Col. iii. 16. The free uſe of the *Bible* and *common ſenſe*, was, under the Divine Bleſſing, the principal means of our deliverance from the darkneſs and miſeries of popiſh ſuperſtition and tyranny; and *this* muſt be the means of improving and perfecting our liberty, in oppoſition to all the remains of that enſlaving ſpirit, too prevalent amongſt miſtaken proteſtants.

8. Finally, while the caſe is ſuch, that through our own weakneſs or that of others, we *cannot* carry our charity ſo *high*, as to partake of the Lord's Supper together at the ſame table; or otherwiſe worſhip together in the ſame forms; while I ſay this is our unhappy caſe, let us be extreamly careful, to exerciſe and exemplify that grace in mutual forbearance, and all other offices of chriſtian condeſcenſion and goodneſs.—Let

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us *put away all wrath, ſtrife, bitterneſs, anger, clamour, and evil ſpeaking---and put on bowels of mercy, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, meekneſs; believing all things, hoping all things poſſible in favour of thoſe that differ from us* (Epheſ. iv. 31. Col. iii. 6, 12. 1 Cor. xiii. 7.) That the means uſed to ſupport our at preſent unavoidable ſeparations, may not encreaſe and aggravate them, or prove the occaſions of a real alienation of heart from one another, and thereby injure the *internal power*, as well as the *external form* of godlineſs; always remembring it is the *expreſs, repeated* command, and even *dying charge* of the bleſſed Redeemer—That WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER---Which he doubtleſs intended, ſhould take place, and be univerſally obſerved by us, notwithſtanding any of our unhappy differences in opinions, not really affecting the eſſentials of our religious profeſſions; and that as a neceſſary preſervative from the bad conſequences, thoſe differences might otherwiſe be attended with. By which *love*, we are not to underſtand that *general philanthropy*, or *good-will* we owe *to all mankind*; though that is alſo clearly taught, and ſtrongly enforced in the goſpel, as our indiſpenſible duty; but that particular *affectionate eſteem, kindneſs and complacency, which ariſes from ſome peculiarly near and endearing relation*—Such a relation there is between all true chriſtians, as the

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ſpiritual children of the ſame heavenly Father—redeem'd by the ſame precious blood of Chriſt---ſanctify'd by the ſame gracious Spirit --- members of the ſame body, and joint heirs of the ſame inheritance in the world to come. And the poſſeſſing the genuine principles of this divine affection, and (as we have opportunity) the actual exerciſe of it towards all the diſciples of Chriſt, is in ſcripture made an eſſential part of the chriſtian character; without which we cannot juſtify to the world, or even to our own hearts, our pretenſions to it. John xiii. 35. *By this ſhall all men know that you are my diſciples, if ye love one another.* 1 John iii. 14. *We know we have paſſed from death unto life, becauſe we love the brethren: He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* All which is farther enforced by the example of Chriſt, the apoſtles and primitive chriſtians; by the tenour of the goſpel, and the unutterable pleaſure, the conſciouſneſs and effects of this truly chriſtian virtue muſt give to our minds.

Many of our perſecuting zealots indeed admit of all this, and would not be thought to want *chriſtian charity*, notwithſtanding even their cruel treatment of thoſe that differ from them. But then, they confine *chriſtianity* to their *own* particular *opinions*; and its *charity*, to their own *party*; brand all other chriſtians with the odious epithets of

of *heretic*, *ſchiſmatic*, and the like; which in *their* language means nothing leſs than *real enemies to Chriſt and his religion*; and from thence conclude it is their duty not only to *hate them with perfect hatred* (miſ-applying the words of the pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* cxxxix. 21, 22.) But alſo to puniſh them to the utmoſt of their power; as, if not the fitteſt means to reclaim them, yet the juſt deſert of their crime of differing from them, and a neceſſary vindication of the honour of God and his church. Not conſidering that the goſpel of Chriſt gives no authority or encouragement to its believers, to puniſh even *infidels* themſelves, as *ſuch*; or deprive them of any of their natural or civil rights and liberties; but on the contrary commands them *to live peaceably with, and do good unto all men; in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves; the weapons of our warfare* in theſe caſes, *being ſpiritual, not carnal.* Much leſs will it warrant, any oppreſſive meaſures towards thoſe who bear the chriſtian name, and according to the light given them, endeavour to ſupport the credit of it, by a conſcientious regard to all chriſtian duties, meerly becauſe they happen to differ from us.

But the *ignorance* of theſe unhappy people, which is the mother of this bitter zeal, as well as their devotion, is extreamly groſs, and every way deplorable. — They take

the ideas of the *chriſtian* (if they have any at all) not from *the Bible*, the only authentic ſtandard in this caſe, but from their own raſh prejudices, the faſhionable and current opinions of their country, or the peculiarities of the ſect or party they have been brought up in, &c. And he that does not anſwer to their wild and ſenſeleſs conceits, is mark'd out as a fit object of their perſecuting ſpleen and reſentment. Whereas would they do themſelves and their cauſe ſo much juſtice, as to conſult the Divine Word, with conſideration and candour, they muſt be convinced, that the *true chriſtian character*, is really form'd upon principles infinitely more generous and rational, than national prejudices, the byaſſes of a narrow education, or the peculiarities of any party whatſoever.—The chriſtian, as they might be there informed, — cordially believes the bible as a divine revelation — puts his hope and truſt in its promiſes---repents ſincerely of his ſins, and devotes himſelf to the will of the Deity --- Feels his heart habitually aw'd with the *majeſty*, and encouraged by the *benignity* of the divine perfections; and therefore fears and loves the great poſſeſſor of them above all---Devoutly and conſtantly worſhips him; and whether in the forms eſtabliſhed, or tolerated, approved or condemned by men, does it in *ſpirit and in truth*. --- Conſcious of the price of his redemption,

demption, his filial relation to the bleſſed God, and his intereſt in the glorious proſpects open'd to his faith in *another world*; he endeavours to keep himſelf unſpotted from the *pollutions*, and to live above the *flatteries* and *terrors* of *this*. --- Makes it his conſtant and watchful care to demonſtrate the power of his faith, and the purity of his hope, by an humble imitation of the example of Chriſt; in ſobriety, chaſtity, juſtice, mercy; and all the duties of ſelf-government and benevolence, the ſolitary and the ſocial life. --- Gratefully acknowledges his obligations to the grace of the Holy Spirit for all this---and refers the acceptance of his perſon and ſervices, to the Divine Efficacy of the ſacrifice and interceſſion of Chriſt as his ONLY *Mediator*. --- This is THE CHRISTIAN; at leaſt theſe are the principal outlines of his *character*. --- A character truly excellent and amiable; that gives *real* greatneſs to the moſt exalted monarch, and worth and dignity to the pooreſt ſlave; does the higheſt honour to our reaſon, and will be the glory and joy of our immortality. --- A character therefore, that under whatever religious denomination amongſt us it appears, juſtly claims that *particular eſteem*, and affectionate regard, the great *Lord of chriſtians* has *commanded* to be paid to it, by all his diſciples; but in compariſon of which,

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all real or nominal distinctions, founded on the meer modes of faith and worship, are *little and trifling*; and the devout bigotry, and fanatical rage for truth, with which they are too often supported, to the last degree contemptible, and indeed to be lamented as the reproach not only of the christian name, but even of human nature *.

May

* Lest any of my readers should mistake my pleas for *moderation* and *charity*, and imagine they encourage a *cold indifference* in religion; or that I thought it no matter what *opinions* we entertain'd, provided we were friends to *liberty*, I take this opportunity to assure them nothing can be farther from my intention. I would not wish any man *indifferent*, even to the *modes* and *forms* of religion; but think it is his duty to endeavour to get the best information he can concerning them, and religiously and steadily follow the light of his conscience in a practical regard to what appears to him to be right. Much less would I be thought to countenance a *sceptical lukewarmness*, in respect of any of those great doctrines that enter into the *essentials* of christian worship, and the truly *gracious* scheme of salvation by Christ; an evil greatly to be lamented, as already too prevalent, and as leading the way to that apostacy from the profession of christianity, to deism, which so shockingly distinguishes the present times. But what I mean is, that *our zeal for God should be according to knowledge*; proportion'd to the rank and importance of its objects; and in respect of those of the highest rank and greatest importance, always govern'd by that gentle and benign spirit of *evangelical philanthropy*, which shines in all the doctrines and precepts, temper and conduct, of *Christ* and his *apostles*. And I am seriously of opinion, and wish *all* my readers would as seriously consider

May the bleſſed Spirit more abundantly illuminate all our minds, and direct our dutiful inquiries into the good and acceptable will of God, that while our hearts glow with that truly pious zeal for the ſupport and propagation of the *peculiar doctrines* and worſhip of the goſpel, ſo juſtly due to them as the neceſſary means of reſtoring our nature to its true grandeur and felicity; we may alſo feel a warm concern for that LIBERTY, CHARITY, and MORAL PURITY, the goſpel ſo ſtrongly inculcates; and which the *church* in general, and every *chriſtian ſociety* in particular, is deſign'd by Chriſt, to cultivate and exemplify to the *world*, as the *diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics* of *his kingdom*. AMEN.

conſider it, *that real chriſtianity will never thoroughly prevail and flouriſh in the world, 'till the profeſſors of it are brought to be upon better terms with one another; lay aſide their mutual jealouſies and animoſities, and live as brethren in ſincere harmony and love; but which I apprehend will never be, 'till conſcience is left intirely free; and the plain* BIBLE *become in* FACT, *as well as* PROFESSION, *the* ONLY *rule of their religious faith and practice.*

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 8. l. 24. Notes; for *dioceſian* read *dioceſan*; the like p. 10. l. 10. Notes. Page 39. l. 29. Notes; add, *p.* in *Philepians*. Page 42. l. 24. dele *before*. Page 48. l. 10. read καλαζησης. ibid. l. laſt but two read χειροδουειω. Page 66. l. 12. for 38. read 37; and after *Jeſus* add *Chriſt*. Page 84. l. 27. for *meet* read *met*. Page 105. l. 13. Notes, for *lay*, read *laid*. Page 128. l. 12. read διαλογισμων. ibid. l. 27. read *as to prejudice*.

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